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BLACK HOLE

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BLACK HOLLOW;

OR, THE

DRAGOON'S BRIDE.

A TALE OF THE RAMAPO IN 1779.

BY N. C. IRON,

AUTHOR OF "TWO GUARDS," "GODBOLD THE SPY," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,

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(No. 69.)

BLACK HOLLOW;

OR,

THE DRAGOON'S BRIDE

CHAPTER I.

NIGHT IN THE GORGE

DEEP in a valley formed by the lofty mountains of Orange county, west of the Highlands of the Hudson—which, from its dreary loneliness, at the distant period of which we write, was a suitable retreat for the rapacious animals of the forest—was the solitary cabin of Elsie Turner, a woman of tall figure and powerful frame. Although aged and gray, her penetrating eye shewed that the mind, of which this radiance was the index, was by no means in the wane. Few asked why she lived in this abandoned glen, and yet fewer attempted to approach it. It had been her haunt beyond the memory of the oldest resident of the district, and tradition had instructed them that, folded in the dark shadow of those frowning mountains, abode her, whom their superstitious fathers had called the “Witch of Black Hollow.” But, whether as a species of refinement upon the rudeness of the age from which this tradition emanated, or the better to propitiate the mystic Elsie, she was no longer called the witch, though the glen was often referred to as Black Hollow.

It was whispered that the space encompassed by the mountains—for there was no ocular evidence of this fact—was shaped like a bowl, and that the dread Elsie used it as her magic cauldron, when tapping the reservoirs of the surrounding hills; and closing with her gates the narrow gorge which was the only entrance to this dell, she filled the interval with water, and, having a furnace in the bowels of the earth, she pursued her incantations in this mighty crucible! There it was said that she inflicted her punishments also, and the unearthly cries which were at times heard to proceed from

this locality, were attributed by the ignorant *habitans* of that wild section to the delinquent demons who struggled in this monstrous boiling kettle, and the only reply of Elsie to these fiendish serfs was to add the fuel of her appalling smile to the raging flames.

The woman, however, was not wholly alone in her gloomy domain. She had a page, whom she called Goblin, who was as puny as his patroness was gigantic. His legs were merely rudimental out-shoots from his body, which was disproportionately elongated, and his head was large, with facial features by no means prepossessing. He was, notwithstanding, active, adroit, and incorruptibly faithful. He was well known in the district, and though he often called at the several houses on errands from his mistress, he never, either by word or gesture, encountered ridicule. He, too, commanded some respect by his stern habits.

The gorge which formed the only entrance to this hidden valley was narrow, dark, and lengthy. It was a mere water-course, paved with the unhewn rock of nature, amidst the sinuosities of which meandered a stream reduced sometimes to a thread, while at other periods it would be swollen to a foaming torrent. Even this apparent caprice in the flow of waters was attributed to the agency of Elsie, and was thought to disclose the ire or placidity of her moods—for none of those by whom the locality was then peopled thought of ascribing the changes to their simple, natural causes, when there was a power within the valley which was solemnly believed to be able to control the very moods of nature. Thus the gorge was suddenly left alone in its isolation, and, as no traveled road approached within several miles, very few persons ever knew the whereabouts of the entrance to dread Elsie's glen.

So wild a region offered a tempting haunt to the freebooter and the fugitive from justice, and when the war of American Independence broke out, it soon became the seat of interesting action, lying, as the Ramapo Valley did, on the direct route from Trenton and Dobb's Ferry—a route well beaten by patriot feet, in the campaigns which followed. The mountains around became infested with the "Cowboys" and refugee scoundrels, who lived by preying upon farmers,

travelers, and stragglers from the army—all of whom were plundered without mercy. After a while, these rogues grew so strong, as to assume a bolder front. They organized into a "brotherhood," established laws and oaths, chose a leader who possessed arbitrary power, and, by the date of our story, as the "Bandits of the Ramapo," had become a terror to the region round about. To hunt these villains, who, it need hardly be said, were coadjutors of the British, and were covered by the ægis of king George III protection—a strong force of Continental cavalry and infantry was detached to the valley, and there remained during the summer of 1779.

Things were in this state when a lady, mounted upon a well-bred horse, might have been seen proceeding down an old but long-avoided road. It was plain that the horse-woman was absorbed in other thoughts than the pleasures of a ride, for she pressed recklessly and eagerly onward, while in her face could be read passion and purpose, which savored aught but of peace of mind. On, on she flew, until the gorge gates were near at hand. The gorge was impassable save to human foot. She therefore pulled rein, and leaped from the saddle with a readiness and agility which shewed that she was not unaccustomed to self-reliance, particularly in horsemanship; then she picketed the animal in a manner that afforded liberty to graze, and at once entered the lonely, impressive place, reputed to be the haunt of evil presences, and of supernatural agencies.

As she gazed up this dark avenue, which seemed the fitting portal of a fallen angel's retreat, her heart evidently failed of its courage. She hesitated, gazed hurriedly and wistfully around, grew pale, and sunk for a moment upon a stone for support. But the will of a resolute woman came to her aid; she quickly sprung to her feet, and resolutely advanced up the gloomy chasm.

It wanted two hours of night when the adventurer entered old Elsie Turner's domains. No water impeded her course, for the slight stream that still flowed from the valley struggled through the deeped furrows of the serrated flooring. But above, the clouds seemed gathering for a storm; the wind rushed through the rocky aisle, uttering loud moans and frightful whisperings, as if in warning to the intruder upon

their old-time haunts. But her step was not stayed, though her cheek became paler, and her brow more troubled. Up, over rocks, down, over declivities, she pressed, until she stood within that space which rumor had pictured as the witch's "cauldron." It was truly a wondrous and impressive spot. The area was small, and therefore gave to the lofty mountains which encompassed it an appearance of yet greater height. The sides of the hills were so precipitous as to render them inaccessible to all but accomplished climbers. The glen was covered with rank vegetation, which had grown to the height of several feet. The only object that towered above this exuberant wildness was the wood dwelling of the aged Elsie, which stood almost in the center of the hollow.

The most profound quiet prevailed; neither insect nor animal life cheered the dull valley by a sound—every thing that had the power of motion seemed to have abandoned this dim retreat to the old queen of darkness. The young woman contemplated the loneliness in this huge cavity with a feeling of awe, and this was soon heightened into terror as she beheld the masses of dark clouds in rapid motion above her. Alarm gave to her feet a new energy, and she was about to force her way through the dank grass and under-wood, when she perceived a narrow footpath which evidently had been worn by human feet passing from the cabin to the gorge. This disclosure cheered her for the moment, for it dissipated a vague apprehension created in her mind by the general report, that no human being entered the Hollow by the gorge, but that Elsie and even Goblin quitted their haunt and returned to it by a flight upon their broomsticks! It was plain that there were *some* visitors to the Hollow, who had not the art to conceal their footsteps.

By this path she soon reached the house. There new terrors awaited her. There was no visible window in the structure, and the only means of entrance was by a low, heavily-built door, scarcely large enough to admit the pigmy form of Goblin, when erect. On the lintel of this doorway was fixed a human skull, which, although its eyes were gone, and the bone was fleshless, seemed to grin derisively on those who sought entrance. Then, as if this hovel was not guarded by sufficient horrors, a skeleton hand was suspended upon the

door, which completely shielded the latch! Trembling with apprehension, yet with a will unshaken by these frightful incidents, the lady struck the door with her riding-whip. There was no response to the blow, and she impatiently repeated the summons. Then a querulous voice exclaimed from within:

"Come in, Amy Ward, thou misguided child."

Amy started at this recognition before she had been seen.

"She knows me, and possibly by the same secret agency she may have learned the secret that I have so carefully sheltered in my heart. Well," she thought, "it may release me from a painful recital. She is a fearful woman," and, as if forgetful of the command to enter, again struck the door.

"Come in, I say," replied Elsie, sharply, "for if thou strikest that door again it shall fall forward and crush thy dainty bones beneath its weight."

"Come in!" repeated Amy, as she gazed upon the hand. "Elsie, good Elsie, I have no power to open the door. *There is a hand already on the latch.*"

"Then that hand shall be thy usher," replied Elsie, and the next moment the skeleton fingers moved. They pressed down the latch, the door opened, and the entrance to Elsie's studio was unclosed!

When she had somewhat recovered from her astonishment, Amy entered, to find the old woman standing erect in the center of the room, folded in a scarlet wrapper, with a turban upon her head of the same radiant color. The apartment was not large, but the walls were furnished with innumerable niches, from which protruded the heads of ravenous animals, birds, and reptiles, such as the wolf, the bear, the eagle, the rattlesnake, etc., in all the ferocity of their nature, which supplied the impression that their bodies were behind, and caused Amy to retreat toward the door until she discovered the ingenious cheat.

"Elsie," she said, at length, "I come to ask assistance—to implore that you will employ a portion of the power which it is said you possess, to my advantage. May I reckon on your help?"

The old creature looked sternly at the maid, but uttered not a word.

"Speak, Elsie," continued Amy, with increasing agitation. "Be merciful to one whose nerves have been already too severely tested by the terrors of this day."

"I've no word of welcome to ye, Amy Ward," exclaimed Elsie; "but I've dealt you mercy, or I should have struck you to the earth as you entered the way which ha' bin trod by no ordinary foot since here I've lived."

"Elsie," said Amy, "I would not have ventured to this frightful labyrinth, but from dire necessity. I want your support, your power, and even your enchantments, if such you possess; and there are no terms within my reach that I will refuse, if you aid me. I implore you to use your power to mitigate my sorrows, or, if you refuse, then do the next act of mercy and commit me to eternity. I am ready to do any thing rash, evil, wrong. Oh, save me from it!"

Elsie's hard features visibly relaxed.

"Thou hast been rash to venture here, Amy Ward," said she, with calmness. "I'll listen to thy griefs, and perhaps I may find an ointment for thy woes. What would you have, child?"

"I would ask your aid, good mother," replied Amy, while a blush suffused her face; "I would ask you to influence the heart of another in my favor—one whose heart is free, but who is too absorbed in devotion to his country to love me as I crave."

"Ah," interposed Elsie, "it were better for thee, I think, that I should practice my powers upon thyself, rather than upon the one thou covetest. Thou needest to be disenchanted."

"Worthy advice of a mother to her child," replied Amy, with something of resentment in her tone; "but you and I do not occupy that relation to each other. If I required counsel I should not have sought Black Hollow as my temple, nor Elsie Turner as my monitress. I want aid—can you give it?"

She spoke with a firmness of tone and a flash of the eye which proved how great was the passion which mastered her.

"Who is he whose soul thou wouldst so mercifully recommend to my enchantments?"

"If you know what passes in my heart, surely you can read its secrets. I love the gallant Captain of a hundred horse, whose encampment is not far distant."

"Young Randolph Murray?" said the old woman, in evident surprise. "Amy Ward, he is no mate for thee. Though fierce and bloody in the saddle, the instant he has sheathed his sword and washed his reeking hands of the day's carnage, he is calm and gentle as a lamb, and he then seeks that comfort and repose that your fiery nature *never* could afford him."

"Thou knowest me not, Elsie," exclaimed the excited maid. "I would sacrifice every taste, every ambition, every feeling to win Randolph Murray's love. I have his regard, but I *must* have his love—his whole heart. I *will* have it!" She looked queenly in her fury.

"Randolph is more sagacious than thou, foolish maiden; and he uses his wisdom as well in matters of the heart as in those of battle. No, no, he has cast his eyes another way, and his regard only is for thee. Be content with that; it is all thou canst have, for, even now, his back is turned against thee."

"Do you speak from your own knowledge?" demanded Amy.

"From my own knowledge," deliberately responded Elsie.

"That Randolph Murray turns his back on me?" continued Amy.

"Ay," said Elsie, firmly.

"And with his face toward one whom he regards with more favor than myself?" asked Amy, with a degree of trepidation that betrayed a tremor in every limb.

"It is even so," replied Elsie, with solemnity.

"I can not think it. I can not believe it, Elsie," exclaimed Amy, after a pause of evident agony. "I know you are in error. Randolph Murray may be, at this moment, indifferent to me; but he does *not* prefer another. There is nothing so fatal as *that* between us."

"Yes, as I am able to read human hearts and the future, I tell thee it is so; he loves another, and thou art *not* of his soul's choice. I can tell thee no more." Elsie spoke with feeling, but with great earnestness.

"False, false! It can not be true. I must have him—I *will* have him for mine alone. I quit thy roof with my heart on fire—my soul wild and dark as this terrible night," and opening the door she rushed from the cabin toward the gorge.

"Come back, come back!" exclaimed Elsie, in undisguised terror. "The gates of the gorge are closed—thou canst not quit!" but her voice was unheard, and the impetuous girl plunged onward.

"Goblin!" exclaimed Elsie, as she reëntered the room, "Goblin! Here! Quick!"

The dwarf answered the summons at once.

"Follow her. The waters are rushing down the gorge in such fury that she can not proceed beyond the path. But she is wild, and may not heed even the waters. Quick, I say! Guide her back here!"

Even as she spoke, Goblin was lost in the darkness.

The distracted girl, on quitting the cabin, rushed along the path which conducted to the gorge. She reached the margin of the outlet—hurried into the chasm, and, upon descending, found herself plunged into a foaming stream of water. She uttered a piercing cry, which rung out upon the night wild and clear above the rushing of the waters. It was quickly answered from the bank, for Goblin was at hand:

"Cling to the rocks, and I'll come to you."

The terrified girl heard and comprehended the shout from above; but though life had suddenly become sweet because death seemed so near, the relentless waters bore her from the promised aid. With the savage torrents hissing in her ears, she was borne down this gloomy vale of death. All the despair of the moment gave way to the one great hope of life.

"Cling to the rocks, and I'll be with you!" The words sounded like a clarion, but they seemed to die away in the distance like an echo, and she passed from consciousness as the last faint note died away.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONQUEROR CONQUERED.

THERE were not two more devoted friends in the Revolutionary army than Randolph Murray and Alfred Horton. The former, a Captain of horse, had participated in so many bold adventures, that his presence afforded a feeling of security to every district where he was encamped. His men, too, had such reverence for their youthful leader, that they fought almost as much for his honor and approval as for the great cause of independence. Nor was Alfred Horton less bold. His name was associated with much honorable service in the field. He was Captain of a company of infantry, between which and the fearless dragoons of Randolph Murray was maintained a species of Free Masonry brotherhood, in consequence of the romantic incident by which their leaders had become such faithful friends.

The introduction of Randolph to Alfred took place upon the battle-field, amid the dead and dying. Alfred and his company had been surrounded by the British; they fought gallantly, but were fearfully outnumbered, and no succor seemed at hand, when the eye of Randolph perceived their desperate condition. He knew the metal of his troopers, though few in number, and gave the word to charge. They dashed forward like a whirlwind, bearing a thunderbolt at its head, which was Randolph; and, though those who beheld the seemingly rash attempt thought that he was riding to destruction, he quickly demonstrated that he better knew the path to victory, for he broke through the British ranks, rescued his brother soldiers, and then retired in safety, despite every effort of the foe. The next morning, at an early hour, Alfred Horton appeared in Randolph's tent, to express his gratitude for the timely aid that he had rendered, and, before these generous spirits separated, they had formed an attachment that became uninterrupted and sincere.

The uncertainty of the British movements at this period kept Washington on the alert at all points. The banks of

the Hudson were sedulously guarded. Thus Randolph and Alfred Horton were now in close proximity, being stationed only a few miles apart, and they passed what leisure is allotted to a soldier in active service, in each other's society. One morning, Alfred Horton entered the encampment of his friend. They had not met for several days, for Randolph had been out upon a scout into the Jerseys, and, though he had returned with but little intelligence, had brought with him a few wagon-loads of stores which he had intercepted, and which were much needed by his men. The friends greeted each other cordially, and, after a little conversation, the infantry Captain said :

"Now put your name to that report to your superior officer, as I have done to mine two hours ago, and then afford me your attention."

Randolph at once signed his report, and looking at Alfred Horton, pleasantly remarked :

"Now, Albert, I am at your disposal."

"For the day?" suggested Albert.

"Not exactly that," replied Randolph, for I had resolved on discharging certain camp duties. I have ordered out the horses unsaddled, that I may inspect each animal of the troop—look well to their legs and feet; see that those galled or wounded may be well attended, and arrange for resting such as are sick or weary; for, though my brave fellows yield glorious fruit under proper culture, I find that, to make efficient soldiers, they are as much in need of a preceptor in the stable, and in lesser matters, as of a good leader in the field."

"Humph!" ejaculated the Captain of infantry; "all very good—only too much of a good thing for me. I propose to have you accompany me to a fête to be given at a very pleasant mansion, not many miles from here."

"A fête, my dear friend!" exclaimed Randolph, in astonishment; "indeed, I can not spare the day for such a purpose."

"Think again, Randolph," interposed the Captain. "There is no occasion for you to examine those exhausted chargers to-day. Let them tranquilly graze upon the rich pasturage of Orange county, and then to-morrow, after their great feast, you can summon them, and better learn their failings. Full

stomachs work wonderful cures in army horses. Try the remedy for once."

"I dislike to refuse you, Alfred," said Randolph, "because I perceive that you have resolved that no duty shall interfere with your foreordained piece of pleasure."

"The truth, Randolph," replied Alfred. "I rashly engaged to be there along with you, and shall consider you a lawful conscript to the fair."

"Then I must be your companion," replied Randolph, "so put me on the roll."

"Thank you, gallant Dragoon!" exclaimed Horton, grasping the other's hands. "I accept your compliance as a tribute to the beautiful as well as to the brave."

"Who are we to meet, and where are we to go? I suppose that you are not engaged to Sir Henry Clinton, nor your destination to be the city of New York?"

"No, Randolph," replied Alfred, with his usual cheerfulness, "whenever we go down the river to visit that scion of aristocracy, it will be a 'surprise party,' without preliminary courtesies or invitation. Our host is a gentleman named Woolfall, a wealthy resident of these parts, who is devoted to our cause, although too old to fight. The male portion of the conclave will, I imagine, be 'of the war;' the female department will be furnished by the district; the belle of the party will be the daughter of the host, the fair Pauline Woolfall. Ah, she is beautiful to behold! Beautiful as a poet's creation, only that, with faultless figure and graceful carriage, she possesses a mind not less attractive. So beware, my gallant Captain, or you will be overcome by a woman, much as you may dislike to be vanquished in a fair field."

"Why do you entice me into such perilous society?" said Randolph, with a hearty laugh at his friend's rhapsody and prophecy.

"Because," replied Alfred, "I wish you well. I have seen you escape great dangers unscathed, and you may escape now. Courage and prudence, my friend, are your virtues. But, let our horses be saddled at once, that we may be early on the road, not to seem lacking in courtesy to our host."

The horses were soon announced as in readiness, and the

friends were quickly in the saddle. Passing beyond the tents, they proceeded toward Mr. Woodfall's. When they reached the residence of that gentleman, they found but few visitors had preceded them, which gave the young men opportunity for a more pleasing introduction to the host and his daughter. Randolph was filled with surprise at Pauline's confessing to himself that his friend's estimate of her loveliness were by no means extravagant. But added to her charms of person, was an attractive witchery of manner, that was rendered more irresistible from her simplicity and absence of design, and Randolph had but little doubt that there were many victims to her wiles, who never had given language to the torture of their hearts. It was the custom of wealthy parents before the war to educate their children in England, and Pauline had been there for that purpose, and Randolph found her truly accomplished. Before the visitors began to arrive in any number, the officer and the fair hostess had established quite an intimacy.

But the continuous influx of her guests forced Pauline from Randolph's presence to bid them welcome. He watched every movement of her graceful form, and caught each silvery accent of her voice. After a time dancing was proposed, and one of the gentlemen set the example of selecting partners, by soliciting of Pauline the honor of her hand. Accepting his proffered arm, they proceeded to the lawn where the violin was waiting. They were followed by many others, until Randolph found himself alone. He, too, quitted the room, but only to move a few steps and observe the dancers, or rather, the only one who had interest in his eye. The dance had ended and been resumed several times, and once, during the ceremony of exchange of partners, Pauline furtively cast a glance to where Randolph stood; but the next instant she engaged herself for the ensuing cotillion. After a time, she quitted the lawn for the house. Randolph, at her approach, met her, and by his conversation, insensibly led her away through the garden walks. Side by side they walked, so deeply engrossed with each other, as to be unconscious of all else save their own happiness. They had reached a secluded part of the grounds, when Pauline, perceiving the distance to which they had strolled, suddenly paused in confusion, and

remarked, with much tact, as if she had merely acted as his *cicerone* :

“ The grounds extend to yonder highlands beyond the dell ; but I am already too far distant from my guests, and shall be charged with inattention.”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Randolph, with a sigh, “ society has privileges that must not be superseded for a poor claimant like myself ; but I could with less reluctance sacrifice a portion of my life, than lose your association at the present moment among these quiet shades.”

There was nothing in these words beyond the not unusual flattery of a “ gallant ” of that period, but the manner in which they were uttered, the sincerity of the speaker, and the susceptible and truthful nature of Pauline, combined in producing a visible effect upon the lady, whose pale face and trembling figure at once attracted the observation of Randolph. He was pained and glad, but did not forget what was due to a lady in agitation, and implored her to accept the assistance of his support, and to permit him to signal for assistance. Pauline placed her arm in that of Randolph, and they proceeded slowly to retrace their steps.

No further conversation ensued. Both seemed thoughtful. Randolph confined himself to inquiries of a commonplace nature. This desultory conversation gave her time to compose her nerves, and before they reached the house, Pauline was quite restored. She at once passed within the rooms, and although she did nothing to avoid the society of Randolph, it was observed that the remainder of their intercourse occurred when grouped with others.

When Captain Horton reminded Randolph that the hour for departure had arrived, a circumstance that might not otherwise have occurred to his own mind, he felt some unwillingness to change his quarters ; but like a true soldier at roll-call, responded and prepared at once to leave. In bidding adieu to Pauline, a little confusion was discernible in both parties ; but the generous and hospitable father was so pleased with Captain Murray, that he would not resign his hand until he had extracted from him a promise that he would repeat his visit at as early a day as his duties would permit.

The friends mounted their horses and quitted the house ;

and, though Alfred Horton had been so voluble in the morning in reference to their lively hostess, that astute critic, from some subtle reason, abstained from all allusion to her on his return. Miss Woodfall, the peerless beauty of the assembled fair, was only thought of—not made the theme of remark.

Significant silence!

Pauline availed herself of the earliest opportunity to retire when her friends had left the house, and in the silence of her room, let her thoughts revert to the day's experience. Of Captain Murray she had heard as a brave but somewhat reckless leader of fearless troopers, well fitted to use the sword and to command those stubborn spirits with whom he had performed much gallant service; but when she saw in him the handsome soldier and accomplished man, but whose calling could not be detected from any word of his conversation, who never referred to war or to the achievements of his brave men, she confessed both her surprise and her admiration.

Poor Pauline!

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE AT THE GORGE.

THE morning after Randolph's return from the fête, his attendant and body-servant, Batman, was somewhat astonished at the indisposition of the proverbially restless Captain to rise from his pillow. He was commonly the first person moving in the camp, and thus by example as well as by his precepts, he exhibited his love of diligence. But this morning he had dismissed his wiser maxims and was indulging in dreams. Again was he strolling through those fragrant gardens with Pauline, guiding her footsteps. Again he recalled her words, her acts, her looks; he was in an elysium known only to those touched with the divinity of love. The practical Batman, however, ventured to disturb this reverie, and to hint to Randolph how the morning was progressing. The dream folded its wings slowly, and duty again stood in its stead. One moment to Pauline but a whole day to his

country. His breakfast disposed of, he immediately ordered out the horses, which he examined with close scrutiny, together with the accouterments of the men, who now anticipated some instant service, for it was his wont, previous to every expedition, to personally inform himself of each inefficient man and unfit horse, that he might not be incumbered in his movements by the tardiness of either. Yet, Randolph had no design of engaging in any immediate enterprise; the newly stirred feelings within his breast seemed to require activity to keep them down; and for two days, he was the most uneasy, most energetic of mortals.

On the following afternoon, Alfred Horton rode into camp. Randolph was delighted to see him. The infantry Captain came just in time to escape a heavy storm.

"Why, Randolph," exclaimed his merry friend, "are all your horses lame, that you have have not ridden once to see me? I expected you yesterday, and lament you did not come, for I had the honor of a call from Mr. Woodfall, who was accompanied by his daughter. They did not dismount; but the worthy father insisted upon my accompanying them home, and there I spent a very delightful evening, at the close of which, both my entertainers expressed their regret at your absence—the father, because he is enraptured with you, and the daughter, because she thought you would have afforded me additional protection on my return to camp."

Randolph was agitated at his reference to Pauline. He was well aware that this delicate allusion of Alfred to the Woodfalls was intended to cheer him, and that Randolph was not expected to put a literal construction upon the relative feelings of the father and the daughter as expressed by him.

Then the friends were startled by a vivid flash of lightning that dashed through the tent, followed by a peal of thunder which shook the earth. These awful messengers were succeeded by torrents of rain, which, although very refreshing to the pastures, were by no means enjoyed by those sheltered beneath canvas roofs. After a while, the heavy rush of waters from above subsided; the dark clouds rolled on to the west, and serenity succeeded this boisterous outbreak of the elements. Night was approaching, and Alfred Horton prepared to leave his friend.

"Farewell, Randolph," he said, "we must hold ourselves prepared to join our comrades at Peekskill. It is the opinion at head-quarters that Sir Henry Clinton will attack us there. This is one object of this hurried visit, to give you time to prepare for a change of quarters."

"It is not impossible," replied Randolph; "but it will prove a mere exhibition of his weakness. Sir Henry has neither the skill nor the enterprise, even if he has the power, to make such an attack effective, and, if he should venture up the river for this purpose, he will scarcely hold Peekskill beyond the day of its invasion. However, he is very active in massing his troops below, as if he intended to make *some* use of them, and may march in that direction; but then, he prides himself upon his artfulness in war, and he may be merely employing these devices to mask some other movement."

Alfred was soon beyond the boundaries of the camp.

"Drill," said he to his attendant orderly, as they arrived at intersecting roads, "I shall take the direction of the gorge. It is two miles nearer and quite as safe. I know the way perfectly."

"That road's not passable, sir," replied the orderly. "It never is after storms. I've lived in this locality long afore I was a soldier, and I never knew any one try to madden Old Elsie by goin' there after a storm."

"Old Elsie! What folly to keep that old creature in mind. It is quite time that we should cut the chains of her silly charm. We will do so now by riding right through her domain. So put aside your folly and your fears and come on. If Elsie has aught to say in opposition to my purpose, let her meet me there, and we will test her supernatural powers to their worst."

Drill was horrified at this fearful defiance of his Captain. He sluggishly followed the resolute chief, expecting every instant to see Elsie whirling through the air upon her broomstick, in order to inflict vengeance upon her bold traducer. The gallant Captain, however, unconscious of the untoward fate to which the fears of his orderly had condemned him, rode slowly forward, deeply impressed with the sublime nature of the scenery, which was made yet wilder by the shadows of approaching night. Suddenly, however, a scream, like that

of the human voice, seemed to rush through the air. He reined in his horse and listened, and in the slight interval, Drill rode up, pale with alfright.

"Did you hear a cry, Drill?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, in tremulous tones.

"Where did it come from?"

"From the glen, sir," whispered Drill, scarcely above his breath; "'Tis Elsie at her imps."

At this moment the cry was repeated. It was now distinctly heard, and was not less plainly a scream of suffering.

"It comes from the hollow near the gorge," exclaimed Alfred. "It is the cry of agony scarcely a remove from death. Spur on, Drill, spur on! There is not a moment to be lost!"

He dashed down the steep path that led to the hollow, regardless of the peril of the way, with that scream of agony ringing in his ears. But that which filled the Captain with energy, depressed the subaltern with fear. Poor Drill, burdened with the superstitions of his youth, believed that the cries were uttered by the spirit of the mountains, with no other object than to allure his leader and himself to their destruction; but too faithful to retreat while his superior officer had gone forward, he cautiously descended to the gorge, prepared to meet his fate like a true soldier.

Captain Horton soon stood by the stream rushing from the gorge. It was a deep, foaming torrent, and the passage of the road seemed effectually closed to man or horse. Then a third prolonged scream met his ear and died into a moan. Alfred was transfixed with horror. The sight that met his eye was most appalling. The waters of the glen were driving through the narrow throat of the gorge with frightful velocity, and just at a point where their force was greatest, where the rock was hard, rugged, and unyielding, and where a more extended reservoir received the waters and hurled them across the road, a female was seen suspended by her hands, clinging to the rock with a desperation that exhibited the fearfulness of her struggle against impending death. Around boiled the turbulent waters, as if impatient for a prey that only held to life by such a fragile tenure. It occupied but a moment for Alfred to comprehend the frightful peril of this sufferer. He caught one gleam of her dark, expressive eye, full of hope and

pleading eloquence, such as is denied to language. Leaping from his horse, and disdaining the fury of the flood, he exclaimed :

"Be firm, dear lady, I will come to your rescue. I will succor you or perish in the torrent."

As he entered the stream, he felt himself drawn violently back. **Drill was upon him.**

"'Tis a fetch. 'Tis Elsie. It's no maiden in distress. They are the bones of old Elsie, dressed in a maiden's skin. You'll perish if you go ! She'll roll you down the stream as she's done hundreds of others, and then laugh over your fate ! **Don't go. Come back !**"

Alfred paused for a moment under the influence of this vehement appeal of his orderly ; but another glance from that imploring face was enough. He plunged into the stream, and boldly fought his way toward the drowning lady. The fierce waters, as if jealous of their victim, seemed to roll with increased fury from the gorge. Thrice was Alfred hurled several yards down the stream ; but his vigorous limbs enabled him to recover ; he repeated his struggle, and at length worked his way to the mouth of the gorge. There was the crisis of the battle, for there the current was strongest, and he had to turn an angle of the rock before he could reach the stranger. He was weakened by his incessant efforts, while the current had a never-failing strength. By perseverance, however, he discovered a crevice in the rock. He thrust in his hand, and despite the heavy rush of waters, he passed the angle, and the next instant his arm encircled the waist of the drowning girl ; he had deprived of their prey the hungry waters. She was just sensible of her deliverance. Her hands relaxed their grasp, her eyes closed, and her head fell upon the shoulder of the brave man who had rescued her. A thrill of happiness shot through Alfred's heart. Though plunged nearly to his neck in water, with a stream so powerful that he could only retain his standing by a firm hold upon the rock, with failing strength, and additional weight to support, he still felt this the happiest moment of his life. But he was not amphibious, and, happy as he was, he could not long dwell there. He therefore prepared to escape, not without much solicitude as to the manner in which he should succeed. Once quitting

his hold upon the rock, he well knew that he must, for a time, be at the mercy of the current. He was more timid, now that he had additional care, and he also felt, in reference to himself, that if he could be allowed to live for her whom he now held, that life to him would be very precious.

The faithful Drill had not been idle. He regretted the situation of his Captain, which he ascribed to enchantment; yet his belief in the great powers of Elsie did not prevent his making the utmost efforts to protect his officer's life. The sun had set, but there still was enough light to perceive distinctly all that passed. Drill witnessed, with horror, the ardor with which Alfred grasped the witch, who, he believed, had rendered herself so fair and youthful. He was now in the siren's meshes—a sacrifice to his bold humanity. With martial deliberation, however, this brave soldier prepared to oppose the witch's diabolical schemes. To his own two horses he added a third that he had found picketed to a tree, and, placing them side by side, led them into the foaming waters. At first they plunged and became unmanageable, but his firm hold of the reins and his determined conduct, secured their obedience. This living barrier only gave him command of the shallower and less turbulent portion of the torrent; but as he still stood at the heads of the animals, with their united bridles grasped tightly in his hand, he found he could cast himself into the most dangerous portion of the current, and yet recover his position by means of the reins. This device the shrewd orderly put into practice twice, that he might be prepared for the emergency he felt must come. The horses behaved admirably, and withstood the severe haul upon their heads with resolute endurance.

Captain Horton was unconscious of the sagacious preparations which his servant was making for his assistance. He still clasped his charge closely to his heart; but, unable to afford her that attention which her sinking state demanded, he determined to abandon his hold upon the rocks, and commit himself to the fury of the waters, trusting to his strength, as he had done before, to overcome their mercilessness. But no sooner did he release his hold, than the force of the current drove him from his footing. At the same moment the lady, who had rested so helplessly on his shoulder, awakened

suddenly to new terrors, folded her arms around his neck, and, clinging there as if indulging that fatal rancor against which Drill had cautioned him, added so much to his embarrassment that he became incapable of putting forth those great efforts demanded by the danger. He and his burden were hurried together down the foaming stream. Then came the triumph of the dauntless Drill. He stood ready for the crisis which he had foreseen: Leaping into the flood just as the victims were borne past him, still grasping the reins, he seized the Captain by his collar. For a single instant he lost his footing; but by his strength, he recovered it, and then attempted to draw the Captain toward the land.

"Knock off the witch," he cried, "or she'll kill you;" and he would himself have enforced these instructions had not his hand been occupied with the reins; but Alfred did not release the fair form that he had ventured his life to save.

The horses, alarmed at the struggle in the water, began to plunge and recede from the boiling stream, and thus became involuntary instruments of preservation, for they drew Drill from his danger, and with him, Alfred and the lady, whom the persistent orderly still regarded as a witch. One thing, however, was rendered plain to Drill, that, whatever efforts she might have made for the destruction of his Captain, some greater power had ordained his safety. This incident appeased him. Alfred, weak and shaken, stood upon the road, supporting the lady in his arms. He was grateful for her life—grateful for his own, and, extending his hand to Drill, he said:

"You are a gallant fellow, my worthy friend. I owe you my life; nay, I owe you far more than that," and he pressed the lady to his heart. "I know not how to repay your attachment and your valor. But see here, Drill, this lady is sinking beneath the horrors from which she has escaped. Pray, help me to assist her. Where is my horse-cloak? Ah, that is warm and dry. Thank you, good Drill. But she wants more care than we can afford her. Is there any house near by, to which we can convey her?"

"There used to be a cabin about half a mile from here," replied Drill. "Shall we go there?"

"Yes; lead on. I will attend to the lady," said Alfred.

He then placed her upon his own saddle, and, mounting behind, in that manner supported her insensible form. The orderly led the way, and they soon reached the cabin, only to find it tenantless, and there was no residence within another mile. Thither they proceeded and were more fortunate. It was a comfortable homestead, and the instant the housewife understood that distress was at the door, she rushed forward to give hope and comfort.

"We are soldiers," said Alfred, "who have rescued this lady from drowning, and have brought her here for your kind care."

"From drownin'!" exclaimed the woman, repressing her curiosity to learn who she was and where the accident occurred; "poor thing, poor thing, I'll do my best for her," and without farther ceremony the hospitable creature lifted the inanimate form from the saddle and conveyed her inside the dwelling. Then, as the collar of the cloak fell partially back and revealed the pallid face of the still unconscious maiden, the good woman exclaimed, in accents of astonishment: "Why, if it ain't Miss Amy Ward, the Squire's daughter! What could she ha' bin after to get into the water, so well as she knows the country?"

Captain Horton remained outside the house, while the woman busied herself in various applications. He had learned the name of the rescued girl; and now that he had done so, there seemed to him more music in the name of Amy than in any other he had ever heard. The officer and his orderly sat more than an hour upon the stoop, when the door opened and the lady, attired in a somewhat graceless wardrobe, slowly approached them. Alfred advanced to meet her. She caught his hand, pressed it with fervor, and, in a voice almost too weak to be distinguished, said:

"If I had the voice of health and strength, I could not speak my feelings. You have saved me from a fearful death, and your intrepid conduct will remain in my heart forever. May I ask your support to my horse, for I am resolved to attempt the journey home."

"Have they no wagon here, that you can be driven home in?" inquired Alfred, anxious to divert the conversation from the occurrence at the gorge.

"They have none," she replied; "besides, I prefer the back of Firebrand. It is far easier than a carriage, on these rough roads. A wish from me and he will creep forward as easily as an insect upon a leaf."

Alfred raised her to the saddle with the utmost care, and then said:

"With your permission, we will ride with you, lady. To allow you to travel alone in this weak state, would be to leave our duty half performed, which is ever a reproach to a good soldier."

"I will not reject your aid," said Amy, with a smile that did not wholly conceal her sufferings; "nay, I will acknowledge that it would give me much pain to separate from you so soon, for no one can express the sweet reliance which draws the debtor to the creditor, when the debt is life, but the one who has incurred the obligation."

Then she spoke a few kind words to the woman of the house, and bade her farewell, and the horses moved gently forward. It was soon perceived that she had not overrated the almost stealthy movement of the gallant Firebrand, for the noble animal proceeded with the caution of a tender friend.

"We have full three miles to ride," said Amy, after they had quitted the house; but she spoke in a very low and faltering voice.

"Can I support you in any way?" asked Alfred, with great concern. "It is a long distance for your weakened frame."

"Still, I think I can sustain myself," replied Amy; "but I will not hesitate to apply to you if I need your assistance. I feel pleasure in having you near me, and I shall lean upon you with confidence."

"Whatever affords ease to you, gives happiness to me," said Alfred, delighted at the feeling exhibited by the lady, though not a little alarmed at her weak state.

Not another word was uttered until lights were seen glittering between the trees.

"There is my father's house," Amy then remarked. "I am very thankful that I have reached home."

"Who's there?" demanded a voice but a few yards distant.

"Father," replied Amy, "it is I."

"Why, Amy, my dear girl," said her father, advancing beside the saddle, "where have you been, till so late an hour? I have long been most anxious for your return. Who are with you?"

"Soldiers, father," replied Amy; "heroic men who have saved your daughter's life."

She fell into her father's arms, unable longer to bear up. He carried her to the house. Alfred and his orderly followed, waiting in the reception room to learn the state of their charge before their departure. At length the father appeared, and announced that his daughter was still insensible; but that as she was composed, and every care was being taken, he trusted to find her convalescing by morning. Then he listened with great attention to the narrative of his daughter's peril and her rescue; expressing his gratitude in such unmeasured terms that, although Alfred announced to him they were far from their camp and must be on their road, the good man would not permit their departure. He ordered refreshments, directed their horses to be fed, and used every effort to detain them for the night; but the officer assigned his military duties, and promising to ride over next day to see after his charge, he left the hospitable roof beneath which remained one who had stirred the deepest feelings of his soul.

Captain Horton rode toward his camp silently and thoughtfully. He had now time to review the occurrences of the last few hours. He shuddered at the dangers which had surrounded Miss Ward, but admired the firmness with which she had conquered them; for, although she attributed the preservation of her life to him, much of his success was due to her own bravery and endurance. But the incident on which he most dwelt was the ride to the Squire's residence, when in the pure feeling of her unbounded gratitude she requested him to be her companion home, when she declared (her words unqualified by the conventionalities of life) that she could not so soon separate from him; when, on the fatiguing journey, she rested upon him for support, as would a child upon the bosom of its parent, a sister upon a brother, or a wife upon a husband. The words she spoke were brief; the circumstances of the ride were simple; but Alfred felt that the

sincerity of her very soul was in all she said and did. He had, indeed, become an ardent admirer of the fair Amy.

The faithful Drill, too, had his meditations. His mind was occupied with the mystery of the night. He wondered how this lady, if she really were the daughter of the Squire, could have reached the spot where she was discovered. Her woman's strength never could have braved the furious rush of waters that issued from the gorge, unless she had received more than human assistance. Was it Elsie who had, by some influence known to witchcraft, induced this resistless girl to descend from her steed, to hitch him to the tree, and then to follow into the dangers of this gaping gulley, where she was abandoned to destruction? This conjecture was acceptable to his reason, for his mind rejected argument that did not yield to Elsie the possession of superhuman power. Then, assuming this to be true, what might be the consequence to those who had so daringly thwarted the revenge of this fell witch? Could he and his officer hope to escape her malignity? But Drill was, at this moment, awakened to more immediate danger, by a hoarse voice crying, "Stand!" Looking, he perceived a musket leveled at his head. He had unconsciously come upon a sentinel. He gave the count-sign, passed within the lines, and both he and his officer soon retired to indulge their musings with less peril to their brains.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BROKEN WHEEL.

THE next morning after the storm, when the usual routine of duty had been performed, Captain Murray mounted his noble Malvern, and proceeded toward Mr. Woodhall's. In this visit to the father, was concealed the desire to meet the daughter, that he might again behold that loveliness which had made such an impression upon his mind as quite to absorb his thoughts. The ride was bleak and mountainous, varied by hill and dale; but to Randolph all scenery was

alike. The only estimate of the beautiful was already in his eye, and could not be removed by mountain, stream or forest. At length he reached the house, when Mr. Woodfall, who had seen him from the window, in the warmth of hospitality hastened to the door and welcomed his guest most heartily.

"Now, Captain Murray," exclaimed the cheerful host, "pray add to my joy at your arrival, by allowing me to consider you my guest for the day."

"I fear, sir, that I dare not promise that," replied Randolph, looking in vain for Pauline, who might have influenced his decision; "I have military duties yet unperformed."

"They must be mere duties of parade, and will proceed under the supervision of your subalterns," observed Mr. Woodfall, pleasantly, "for I know enough of your character to be well assured that you would not be paying a visit of courtesy to a poor recluse, while there was a duty worthy of your attention undischarged."

"You flatter me highly, sir," said Randolph, smiling. "I must guard my weakness in that respect, or I may fall a victim to your adulation."

"No, sir," replied Mr. Woodfall, with great solemnity, "you have too much strength of character to be injured by flattery. But let us not travel from the main question. You will not refuse to remain the day?"

"I fear that, notwithstanding your prediction of my fortitude, I am about to give evidence of my feebleness, and to reply that if it will contribute to your satisfaction, I shall have great pleasure in remaining," replied the visitor.

"It will afford me the utmost satisfaction," said Mr. Woodfall; "for I should otherwise be alone to-day, as my daughter has gone to some distance, on a visit to a sick friend."

The dragoon Captain was unprepared for this announcement. It dashed into fragments the prospective happiness for the day. He could not suspect Mr. Woodfall of thus urging his invitation, and then designedly following his concurrence by this mode of torture; but it was, nevertheless, very like it, and had Mr. Woodfall been a close observer, he might have distinctly read upon the forehead of the warrior both anger and chagrin, as he spoke of his daughter's absence. In a few minutes, however, the better feelings of the guest

triumphed; he blushed to have done so much injustice to his generous host, and observed:

"I regret the absence of your daughter, though I am glad that you think I can contribute to your comfort in the meanwhile."

A sudden voice, as of the entrance of some persons in the hall, prevented Mr. Woodfall from replying. It was thought that other visitors had arrived, when the door opened, and the servant announced:

"Miss Pauline."

"Miss Pauline?" exclaimed the puzzled Woodfall.

"Yes, father, it is I," replied Miss Pauline, entering; "a most provoking accident has brought me back again."

A blush suffused her face as she discovered a stranger with her father whom she had left alone, and it deepened when she perceived that it was Captain Murray."

Randolph advanced toward her, smiling.

"I can not condole with you on the accident, so that it has left you uninjured," he said, "for it has permitted me the opportunity of seeing you before I am summoned to more active duties."

"But, my dear girl," interposed Mr. Woodfall, "what has led to your return?"

"A broken wheel, dear father," responded Pauline.

"Shattered, no doubt," said Randolph, laughingly, "by that ubiquitous contriver of good and evil, Elsie Turner, of whom, on this occasion, I will not complain."

"You are right, Captain Murray," said Mr. Woodfall, merrily, "there is not a person in the house but will ascribe the accident to old Elsie, but like you, not one dare blame her for it, under the impression that the very air is a tell-tale. But retire and remove your bonnet, Pauline, and join us here, for I trust that Captain Murray will be no less inclined to remain the day, because you are added to our party."

"Oh," exclaimed Randolph, with delight visibly written on his face, "such an honor will be an incentive to our enjoyment. To me, the broken wheel is a wheel of fortune."

Pauline retired from the room, but soon reappeared to add by her presence a new zest to conversation and enjoyment. Singing and music were introduced; then came dinner; after

which, Mr. Woodfall claimed the indulgence of his usual mid-day "nap." Left alone to themselves, Randolph proposed to Pauline a ramble in the garden, to which she assented.

"You did not dance when you visited us," observed Pauline, as they stood upon the lawn.

"No," responded the Captain, "I did not indulge in that pleasure. I know not why, unless with Oriental indolence, I esteemed it the greater luxury to gaze upon the dancers, or, that the lady, whose hand I would have sought, was so much solicited by others, that a poor dragoon knew not whether he might presume to the honor."

"Captain Murray could have asked no lady to accompany him to the dance who would not have accepted him with pleasure," replied Pauline.

And thus they talked, as they slowly pursued their way down the garden, where they retraced those paths and windings which had before occasioned Randolph so much delight. The day was bright and pleasant. The storm of the previous morning had refreshed and invigorated the grass and foliage. It was a charming time to be abroad. Perhaps some other presence was there also, to lend its enchantment to the moment? Be this as it may, Randolph and Pauline seemed insensible to distance, and did not awaken from their oblivious dream, until they had reached the extremity of the grounds and stood beneath the deep shadows of those trees which Pauline had before pointed out as the uplands beyond the valley. The lady then contemplated their position with some alarm; but Randolph, the selfish creature, viewed it with satisfaction, if the chronicle tells the truth.

"Let us hasten our return," said she; "we have unconsciously wandered to a spot never visited even by our stoutest servants, and although there may be no absolute danger here, I have a girlish terror of the wood, and feel most uneasy when near it."

"It is a wild and most beautiful retreat," replied Randolph, gazing around upon the noble trees. "Why is it thus avoided?"

"One cause is that it is said to be a retreat of Old Elsie, whose name you so rashly connected with a broken wheel," replied Pauline, facetiously, for the moment forgetting her

fears, but quietly adding: "It is also said to be a haunt of the notorious Claudie Smith."

"Indeed!" said Randolph, in surprise; "I thought the headquarters of that freebooter were in the caverns of the Ramapo. Twice my cornet has sought him there with a few troopers without success; but now that I find that this atrocious character troubles my friends with his nearer proximity, I will ride down that bleak valley myself, and try if I can not shorten his tether."

A noise was distinctly heard. It came from a few yards distant in the background. The speakers turned in alarm toward the spot, but could discover nothing. Only the lower boughs of a large thick cedar tree were still in agitation. Pauline, though unconscious of the action, drew close to Randolph, as if to solicit his protection, exclaiming, in an excited voice:

"Oh, Captain Murray, there are people here. We are in great danger. Fly, dear sir, fly, or the brigands will seize you!" She spoke with great earnestness.

"What? Do you speak of danger to me and not think of your own peril?" he asked, thrilled in his very soul by this exquisite betrayal of her devotion. He drew her more closely to his side and answered:

"Fear not, dear lady; if there be danger, my arm is equal to great odds in your defense. I would prefer death in your cause to safety when you are imperiled."

"Oh, you can best serve me by leading me from this place," continued Pauline. "These men are inured to crime, and are accustomed to murder. Let us go, I implore."

Randolph pressed her to his heart, and perceiving the state of terror to which she was reduced, commenced a slow retreat, by the path which they both pursued into the wood. Soon they emerged from the deep shadows of the trees into a part less hidden in foliage.

"I think that I may congratulate you upon being beyond danger," remarked Randolph, with the hope of relieving her apprehensions, "if we really have been subjected to any, which I very much question."

"I am glad that you think we have escaped," said Pauline, in an almost inarticulate voice. "There is a seat a

short distance farther. May I trouble you to conduct me there?"

Randolph was alarmed at this increasing weakness and agitation; and almost bearing Pauline on his arm, he proceeded at a more rapid pace toward the spot indicated and soon found the rustic chair. A rivulet was running at their feet, from which he procured water. Pauline soon recovered from her fright.

"I am sure I have acted foolishly," she said; "but my exceeding terror of those brigands is my excuse. I am so glad nothing did happen."

Pauline cast her eyes upon the ground and blushed deeply. Was it true that nothing had happened? Randolph generously contributed to her relief, by instantly remarking:

"I am truly indebted to you. Had I not the pleasure of your society, I should certainly have wandered here while your father indulged in his sleep, and then I might have made a close examination into the cause of the noise that disturbed us, and have paid dearly for the scrutiny."

"Then am I content with all that has occurred," said Pauline, almost unconsciously.

Murray was deeply moved. His eyes met those of Pauline. His heart was on fire. The radiance which beamed on his face kindled the crimson flame in hers. He seized her hand.

"Do I, then, possess an interest in your heart?" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that my safety is more than a matter of humanity to you?"

Pauline did not reply, nor did she withdraw her hand. The tremor of her whole frame reassured Randolph of her sensibility and gentle assent. He continued:

"I paid my first visit to you reluctantly; but I quitted your presence with unwillingness and with pain. Since that first day, your image has been the constant companion of all my duties, and my sternest sense of justice in my judgments has been melted into gentle reproaches, because you seemed to plead within my heart. I conceded every thing to your imagined wish, as if you had been in camp to behold the sacrifice I offered to your gentleness. Then I resolved to visit you again; but not for the presumptive purpose in which I am now indulging. I dared only regard you in distant

reverence, as one whom none could approach but those far more qualified than I. But the incidents of this last hour have banished the thin veil of circumstance which has floated before me, and I am weak enough to take this moment for a confession of my faith in you—of my sincere love for you, *Pauline!*"

Her averted and downcast gaze slowly turned upon him, and when her tearful eyes rested full and clear upon his face, he read in them the revelation of a loving soul. He pressed her to his heart, her head fell upon his shoulder. Thus was the arch flung over their life's river, and two shores drawn together, with the clear, broad stream of love flowing peacefully between.

How quickly two hours flitted away! Two hours! They seemed but a moment, yet how much bliss was compressed into them! Then came the little monitor to call them to the mansion, where the father, awakened from his repose, wondered at their absence. They proceeded arm in arm up the sweet walks—Adam and Eve in Paradise. When they entered the house, Pauline slipped away silently to the privacy of her own chamber, leaving her lover alone to confront the father.

"My dear fellow, where have you been wandering?" inquired Mr. Woodfall, as Murray entered. "Why, I have been twice awake and as often slept again, that I might be as little conscious of your absence as possible."

"I am glad that you had such a comfortable resource in your extremity," replied Randolph, laughing, while Mr. Woodfall joined in the merriment.

Then, as a preliminary narrative to a more important revelation, Randolph informed Mr. Woodfall of the alarm which Pauline had experienced in the forest, concealing, of course, those trifling episodes of which the *dénouement* occurred upon the rustic chair.

"I have no doubt but that it was Claudie whom you disturbed, or some of his brigands," observed Mr. Woodfall. "It is said that he occasionally occupies that wood, from which I have no power to dislodge him; but just now, I think that I am aware of his reason for being so near my residence. He is a good horseman, is choice in the cattle he bestrides, and

wishes to add a very choice animal of mine to his own stud. When this circumstance came to my knowledge, I knew that there was no safety in the stable, so I removed the animal thence to the cellar, where he still remains, surrounded by every security which the house affords."

"This increases the danger to yourself, without removing it from the horse," said Randolph, "for a desperate and powerful rogue like Claudio, would as willingly enter your dwelling as your stable, and then you might neither save your horse nor escape his vengeance. Commit the horse to my charge. I will ride him to the encampment, where I engage he shall be well treated, and if this scoundrel still wishes for the animal, he had better demand it of my troopers."

"But, having seen you, he will now watch for your departure," replied Mr. Woodfall, "and when he perceives that you ride my horse, his rage would be unbounded. He certainly will take steps to intercept you."

"That is precisely my own opinion," said Randolph. "I should thus withdraw the danger from your house. You must leave me to deal with him, and remember that a soldier thinks but little of these encounters."

"It is too generous a proposal to be entertained," replied Mr. Woodfall, sensibly affected. "It would be better to turn the horse loose, than expose you to the vengeance of this marauder."

"Oh, be not alarmed," said the Captain, smiling; "wolves like these, that prowl the woods at night, are more careful of their own bodies than you imagine, and would be unlikely to assail one who has a hundred fierce troopers to avenge his fall."

Mr. Woodfall would not yield to Randolph's arguments; but reserved his decision.

"But I have not disclosed to you all that transpired in and near the wood," said Randolph, with more gravity. "I have some difficulty in approaching the subject, because I fear—"

"Some misfortune has occurred to Pauline!" exclaimed Mr. Woodfall, rising from his chair. "I did not remark her absence. Where is she?"

"Be calm, my dear sir: resent yourself, and give me a few moments' hearing," said the dragon, calmly; "something *has*

occurred to Miss Woodfall, which she does not characterize as a misfortune, and my hope is that you may not do so either."

Randolph then deliberately avowed his love for Pauline, and the interest he occupied in her heart. He spoke with so much earnestness and affection, that Mr. Woodfall was deeply moved. He could not immediately reply; but when Pauline entered the apartment, she saw the hands of her father and Randolph clasped in each other. She read in that grasp the seal of her own bond and transfer to another. Mr. Woodfall folded her to his heart; then placing her hand in that of Randolph, he pronounced upon them a benediction that went with them to the grave—a blessing forever.

"Your acquaintance with each other has been very brief," he said, "and perhaps I might have preferred a longer knowledge to have preceded this moment; but I will not make that a subject of regret, for I can vouch for the sterling qualities of my dear child, and fame has not left me ignorant of the generosity, bravery, and honor of Randolph Murray. Such natures as yours are well fitted for unity. May God bless you as I do, and as I hope you will bless each other."

Mr. Woodfall quitted the room. Randolph clasped Pauline to his breast, and they stood in speechless rapture while this paternal blessing flooded their hearts with its solemn peace.

Time was forgotten in the passage of the day. Father, daughter, lover, were so infinitely happy, that they were only reminded of the distance of Randolph from his camp by the approaching shadows of the night. Then Mr. Woodfall whispered in his ear:

"I have had my horse unearthed from his prison in the cellar, and he now stands pawing at the gate. I have resolved that you shall take him. For, if you did not, you would imagine that his detention here might imperil the safety of the house and Pauline."

"I could not have left without," replied Randolph, "as much in regard for your own safety as that of Pauline; but I will give instructions that the saddle be placed on your horse, which I will ride, for Malvern will follow as faithfully as a dog."

Mr. Woodfall was anxious for Randolph's departure. The pain of separation was much lessened by his promise to return the following day. As Pauline uttered her farewell to Randolph, she said:

"That broken wheel which turned me from my course this morning, Randolph, was the wheel of fortune after all. If in the kitchen it were known what great events had happened in consequence of the accident, it would be said that Elsie meant me well."

"Then tell them, dearest Pauline," replied Randolph, facetiously, pressing a kiss upon her brow; "that is, if you appreciate their erudite auguries."

Randolph was soon in the saddle, pursuing his journey at a brisk pace. He did not disregard the caution of Mr. Woodfall, that he might be followed. But wishing to withdraw all danger from the house, he desired rather than feared the little hazard that might arise to him in undertaking the protection of the horse. The country through which he had to pass was mostly untenanted and favorable to perfidy and ambuscade, being varied by lofty hills, deep valleys, and forest. He had ridden two miles without encountering any one, and began to apprehend that he had been unsuccessful in his lure—that his departure from Mr. Woodfall's had been unnoticed—when, suddenly, three horsemen darted from the wood. He had little doubt as to the character of the men; but they were not prepared to find that he had passed that spot, for they wheeled to the left while he was at their right. The officer perceived that one of these fellows had a carbine slung at his back, but the others were not so armed. It was a party of the brigands, who, having made a *détour*, thought to intercept Captain Murray on the road. For a few seconds, therefore, Randolph and the brigands rode in opposite directions, when one of the latter accidentally turned his head, and then with an oath informed his companions of their error. They turned their horses and redoubled their speed, and by the time Randolph had made such an inspection of them as he desired, they were not more than three hundred yards apart. Randolph put the speed of Mr. Woodfall's animal to the test; he responded bravely to the spur; but the distance between pursuer and pursued was not increased. The

brigands were well mounted, and rode the more savagely for having been thus thwarted.

"Oh, Malvern," said Randolph to his well-trained steed which ran unbridled beside him, "were you my bearer, we could soon outrun these scoundrels. Yet, there is little honor to the fleet in races such as these, and I only await one signal to turn and face the miscreants, and this I think will not be long delayed if we maintain our distance. Hark!" he continued, as a shot was fired, "there is the challenge to rein up. The weapon was well handled, considering the distance and the pace. I distinctly heard its shriek, the ball passed within a few inches of my life. But now that I am equal to these villains in fire-arms, we will wheel and face the dogs, for my troopers must not see their leader flying before only three horse-thieves."

Randolph drew in his horse and fronted his audacious pursuers. The noble Malvern performed the same evolution as if he were guided by a martial rider. The brigands, astonished at this sudden change from flight to defiance, with no advantage on their part in the chase, were intimidated, and halted at a distance of about sixty yards. The sun had set, but it was twilight, and there was sufficient radiance for Randolph to perceive the actions of his adversaries.

"What mean you," he exclaimed, and his eye began to emit that fire which ever kindled in the battle, "by thus pursuing a soldier of the Republic? Ha! You scorned on the extreme right, are you preparing to reply? Let fall that carbine. Drop it on the ground, I say. My pistols kill at sixty yards," continued Randolph, withdrawing a pistol from his holster, "and I never miss my aim. You are within range, and although I do not care to deprive the latter of such a life, I will do it for my own safety."

The fellow contrived to reload the carbine; but he was under the eagle eye of Randolph, and when the villain's comrades plunged their spurs into the horses' flanks to divert Randolph from his purpose, and the threatened man brought the weapon to his shoulder, a flash of light followed, but it was preceded by a pistol-crack, and man and carbine tumbled on the earth, while the horse, furious with fright, dashed furiously up the road and passed the Captain.

The brigands looked fiercely on Randolph and aghast on their fallen comrade, but suddenly they put spurs to their horses and dashed into the woods. Randolph had scarcely recovered from his astonishment at this new movement, when he heard the rapid approach of horses from behind, and the next instant he beheld the welcome advance of reinforcements to himself—cornet Groves and an orderly.

“Well, Groves,” said Randolph, “what have you to report?”

“Dispatches, sir,” replied the cornet.

“It is too dark to examine them, so we will return to camp,” observed Randolph. “What have you here—a led horse?”

“We caught him as he was rushing past us,” replied Groves.

“I ride a borrowed horse,” said Randolph, jocosely, “and Malvern is acting as my orderly. But there lies the claimant of your animal.”

The soldiers cast their eyes upon the dead body of the brigand, and then Randolph gave them a brief narrative of the circumstances which led to his fall. The cornet had seen the two rogues retreat into the wood, and he had no doubt that it was caused by his advance. They soon quitted the ground, leaving the brigand to be dealt with by his comrades, but taking with them his horse.

CHAPTER V.

THE ORDER FOR THE MARCH.

RANDOLPH arriving in camp, retired to his tent to peruse the dispatches. They were brief and absolute. He was ordered to join the forces collected at Peekskill, where there was but little doubt that the British intended to land. The following day was allowed him for preparation. He always smiled at the approach of more active service, and even the thought of so soon quitting the neighborhood where Pauline dwelt, could not repress his exultation at this order,

especially as fortune had allowed him one open day before the march.

Randolph learned that Captain Horton had been at the camp, and finding him absent had written a note, relating the occurrences at the gorge, also stating that he too was ordered to Peckskill, where he hoped to meet Randolph with his troop. He was rejoiced to find that his friend complained of no illness, consequent on the efforts to rescue Amy Ward.

"What could have attracted that merry, fearless beauty, to so dreaded a vicinity as the gorge? Could it be a desire to visit Elsie?" The Captain grew thoughtful and added: "She is a willful creature—daring, independent, fiery; yet to me, she is always as gentle as a child. I can not understand her. I like her, yet I shrink from her. What could have led her to the gorge, but to penetrate to Old Elsie's dwelling? I must try and fathom this mystery, for mystery there is. How odd that Horton should have passed that way at that moment! I hope the poor fellow will escape heart-whole." He again paused and was silently thoughtful. At length he recommenced: "Dear as will be every minute of the morrow, I will steal an hour from my duties, and do the same injustice to my sweet Pauline, to see the Squire's daughter."

Randolph passed the night in sleepless happiness. His mind was in such active meditation upon the incidents of the day, that it could not be composed in slumber; nor did the morning, which summoned him to duties, find him inclined to break the enchantment of his thought. But the practical Batman was ignorant of these influences, and, as he feared that his Captain had not observed the sun, he entered the tent as a second messenger to announce that the day was passing, and that it was the last before the march. Randolph leaped from his couch at this constructive reproof of his trusty servant, and was soon engaged with his officers in making the necessary arrangements for their departure. The fulfilment of these directions was committed to able hands, and, as soon as his presence could be dispensed with in the camp, he mounted his horse and directed his course to the residence of Mr. Ward. The worthy Squire welcomed him in his hearty way; he was, however, in great consternation at what he termed the baseness of Elsie in attempting to allure his

daughter into her power, and expressed his fears at the approach of the "Britishers," as well as at the departure of the troops so long quartered in that vicinity. It was not perceptible which subject he viewed with most regret, he spoke so energetically in reference to each.

"But come in, Cap'n," continued the Squire, "p'raps Amy would like to see you afore you go. Cap'n Horton was here three times yesterday, and the last time he asked to see Amy, and, tho' she was no' so well, she would not refuse him, and I never saw a man so cut up. Well, he's a mighty worthy feller, anyhow, and I shall take as a great favor, too, ef you ken do him a service."

Mrs. Ward here entered the room. She approached Randolph with great pleasure.

"I am glad to see you, Captain Murray," said that lady, "and poor Amy seems quite revived, even at the sound of your voice. Her eye has not been so bright since that dreadful accident befell her. She is in the adjoining room; will you walk in and see her?"

Randolph consented, and he was soon in the presence of the daughter. She was pillowed in an easy-chair. There was a smile upon her face as Randolph entered, but it could not conceal the pain and exhaustion of her spirits. He took her fair hand, as he said:

"I did not hear of your calamity until last night—"

"And you have thus promptly ridden over to see me," interposed Amy. "Thank you. I am grateful for your kindness. The slight hold I have on life—for I am very weak—I owe to your brave and gallant friend, Captain Horton. I saw him yesterday. I perceived that he was shocked at my appearance; he took my hand, pressed it, and was so much affected that ~~my~~ mother led him from the room before a word was spoken, and thus we met and parted."

Amy paused, for her utterance was choked. Tears coursed down her cheeks. It was evident that a painful impression had been made upon her mind. At last she remarked:

"You too, depart in the morning; and my father tells me that the British are preparing a fearful force against you. It depresses me to find my friends exposed to dangers in which I can not share, and I shall dread to hear the result of the

approaching conflict: but at least I will express my personal hope to the one who is now present, that he will use due caution in the struggle."

"I am flattered that you take such interest in my safety," replied Randolph. "Your caution shall not be disregarded, and I trust ere long to return to welcome the roses in your cheeks. It is with regret that I yield to the necessity of leaving you; but a soldier's duties are imperative, and they afford me but little time to make my preparations for departure."

"Must you quit so soon?" asked Amy, rousing quickly, as if from pain. "But I ought to know you must: I fear that even the time you have afforded to this visit will be stolen from the duties due to your command. It has, however, contributed much to my comfort. Notwithstanding the danger of the adventure on which you are ordered, I feel that you will return in safety." She paused suddenly and sighed deeply.

Randolph took her hand, pressed it between his, and then said, with cheerfulness:

"Farewell, Miss Ward. I may be absent but a few days, and I trust that you will do so much better to my return as to receive me in good health."

"Farewell, Captain Murray," said Amy, as he quitted the room; and, when he had closed the door and she was left alone, she added: "I feel already better for his presence. I will not believe that false prediction of Elsie. I think he loves me; but—" She hesitated, and then said, slowly: "If I do not reign unrivaled in his heart, I will not permit another empress there. *No—never!*"

Her pale face flushed up for a moment as if in anger; then became suddenly white. She sunk back in her chair, closed her eyes, and the tears, that would gush through the lids, betrayed the intensity of her feeling.

Randolph was soon on the road to the Woodhall estate.

"Ah," he exclaimed, as he dashed forward at a pace congenial to the impetuous Malvern, "poor Amy is not only very ill, but sadly woeful. No doubt she is deeply affected at the sudden departure of Horton, for it is impossible that she could have seen herself so boldly rescued from death by that gallant fellow, and not award him the whole feelings of

her heart. But that mystery—I must see Horton about it.”

The many miles between the residences of Amy and Pauline were shortened by the speed of his noble horse, and Randolph, ere long, found himself at the door of his beloved. He thought he heard a scream as he rode up, and the next instant the owner threw open the hall doors, rushed down the steps, and grasped his hand in great agitation.

“What is it?” exclaimed Randolph. “Where is Pauline?”

This question seemed to recall the excited father to more thoughtfulness, and, without uttering a word, he hurried with Randolph to the parlor, where stood Pauline, scarcely able to support herself. Now that he saw both father and daughter uninjured before him, he felt comparatively relieved. Whatever calamity they had to narrate, he could hear with composure.

“Oh, Randolph!” at length exclaimed Pauline, “how terrible!”

“Let us dismiss from our minds all that is terrible, dearest Pauline,” said Randolph, “for time, to us, is most precious—confined to a few hours. I am ordered to join the army at Peekskill to-morrow morning. What is it?”

“We heard that you were attacked by Charlie,” replied that gentleman.

“And is that all?” asked Randolph, pressing Pauline to his heart.

“Why did you ride that horse?” asked Pauline, instead of responding to the question.

“There was no danger in a circumstance so simple,” replied Marray. “Three fellows followed me, one of whom carried a carbine. We had an exciting race for a short distance, to my shame, for I do not believe that a man in my troop would have turned his back upon such villains; but the instant the carbine was discharged, I wheeled around and found my pursuers, and they, after a time, retired; though not until two of my men were discerned in the distance, bearing dispatches for me.”

“And were you not injured, Randolph?” said Pauline.

“Nay, dearest Pauline,” replied Randolph. “They did not approach me within sixty yards.”

"This morning we were assured that you were attacked and slain," said Mr. Woodfall. "I immediately dispatched a messenger to your camp to ascertain the truth, and while we were awaiting his return with the utmost anxiety, you appear in person. Pauline uttered a scream as you passed the window. But, thank God, that you are preserved to us and to your country."

Then the conversation turned upon Peekskill; but soon Mr. Woodfall withdrew, and Pauline and Randolph were together, alone.

"I know what sorrow I entail upon you, dearest Pauline," said Randolph, "in my inconsiderate conduct in revealing to you an affection I ought to have concealed. I have been actuated by too much regard for my own feelings and too little for yours. But I was not prepared for this rapid removal, or I might have spared you this suffering."

"You must not speak thus, dear Randolph," said Pauline. "You must not imagine that I would have the relation between us other than it is. If I mourn your absence, I place my feelings by the hope that the love I have pledged adds to your happiness, and lightens those duties that might otherwise seem severe. If I tremble at your danger, it is in the greatness of my love; not because I would withdraw you from the ranks where you so nobly battle for the liberties of our country. There is a position of usefulness even to poor helpless woman in this national struggle; for, as her beloved ones advance to the combat, she need but place upon them the armor of her love, to make them yet more formidable. My heart may bleed to make the sacrifice, dearest Randolph; but I would not have you swerve one inch from the path of honor, because an enemy's sword was in your way. That fame, which you have so gallantly and nobly won, must not be sullied by one thought of Pauline Woodfall's weakness and want of devotion to your honor."

"Noble Pauline! Fit woman for a soldier's wife! Such sentiments will give energy to the arm when it is most needed, and shed a luster upon my sword. Until this moment I was ignorant of the true worth of the jewel which I have won, and now wonder at my temerity in the pursuit of such a prize."

"Then do not seek to retain your influence by flattery."

said Pauline, with a look of humorous reproach ; " for, though such fare may be dainty to the palate, it is unnutritious to the heart."

" I would not insult you with flattery, dearest Pauline," replied Randolph ; " but we have much to speak of. To-morrow we shall be separated by the waters of the Hudson, and soon after the enemy may raise his banner between us."

" But neither that river nor the pennant of the British will obstruct our love."

" No, no," said Randolph, " that sacred feeling is hidden in our hearts, and will, I trust, depart with our souls to sweeten immortality."

" Amen !" ejaculated Pauline, with a solemnity that affected both.

They passed from the room in silence, and then entered the garden by the door near where Randolph had once stood gazing upon the dancers on the lawn. They walked down the fragrant avenues, communing only with their eyes, until they reached the rustic chair to which they had, on a former eventful occasion, descended from the upland wood. The chair was surmounted by a bower of roses, and beneath this floral canopy the lovers were soon seated.

" I reverence this spot, dearest Pauline," said Randolph, " for here were forged for me the sweetest fetters ever worn by man. Never did soldier embrace a captive life with so much ecstasy, nor regard custodian with such faith and tenderness."

" Yet, has it not occurred to you, Randolph," said Pauline, archly, " that your jailer might be no less a prisoner than yourself, although you may seem the only person chained?"

" Yes, Pauline," replied Randolph, " for only yesterday the sentiment was whispered in my ear by the only angel-voice that could have reached my soul. But how a rough trooper like Randolph Murray could penetrate the heart of so sweet a flower as Pauline Woodfall, is to me a subject of as much astonishment as delight."

Thus Pauline and Randolph conversed together, and thus they analyzed their love ; and in this communion they indulged until they were disturbed by a messenger from Mr. Woodfall, who reminded them of the decline of day. Randolph was surprised to discover that the sun was approaching

the horizon. He could keep no reckoning of hours in such society as Pauline's; but remorseless Time had been more persistent in his chronicle, and had registered every second to the prejudice of these devoted lovers, with as much indifference as if this was not their day of separation. However, at the paternal summons, Pauline arose, and together they advanced to the house.

Mr. Woodfall met them with a smile. He affected not to observe the maidenly blush upon his daughter's cheek; but, taking Randolph one side, he said:

"I have learned the particulars of last night's adventure from my messenger to your camp. It was a position of great peril, and to one of less boldness of character than yourself, might have proved fatal. As it is, it will engender a feeling of revenge in the mind of the implacable Claudie, who is watchful, unscrupulous and artful. Under this apprehension, I dispatched another messenger to your camp, to call out an escort of your men here this evening to accompany you back."

"It was kind and thoughtful of you, sir," replied Randolph, quite certain that such orders would receive no attention from the practical Groves; "but there was no necessity for such precaution."

"Indeed, sir, but for the confidence I feel in this protection," continued Mr. Woodfall, "I would not have detained you even thus late at my house."

"Oh, then, I must rejoice in all that you have done," rejoined Randolph, humorously, "if the alternative were a breach of hospitality."

"You must not characterize my anxiety by such a hostile distinction," said Mr. Woodfall. "I reproach myself severely for the danger in which I have placed you, and you must pardon me for employing these rather officious means to insure your safety."

"I fully esteem your motive," replied Randolph; "but I can not permit you to blame yourself for a responsibility I willingly, nay, importunately assumed. As for the danger of offending such enemies as horse-thieves and cowboys, I can only regard it with contempt, and lament that it should have fallen to my hand to inflict correction on one of such a gang."

"That is a military as well as an honorable feeling," remarked Mr. Woodfall, "and would be mine, were I backed by a hundred soldiers; but we isolated civilians find conciliation the only policy we can pursue. To be sure, when this Claude demanded my best horse, I resisted the bandit and professed him an animal slightly its inferior, which he as pertinaciously rejected; but this departure from my temporizing principle has led only to calamity, and those men who have lost their comrade will be fired by a spirit of vengeance, which, perhaps, even their leader may not be able for a day or two to check."

"Well, my dear sir," replied Randolph, "you have provided me against danger by sending for an escort; although, in my opinion, both Mr. Charlie and his brother scoundrels will be cautious how they provoke the vengeance of our troop."

While thus conversing, the door of the apartment opened, and a servant, to whom Randolph had intrusted the hour at which he must depart, appeared and announced that it had arrived.

Randolph was agitated at this sudden disturbance to his happiness; but much as he loved Pauline, he did not hesitate to respond to the call of honor. He pressed the fair girl to his heart, and affected a courage that was not there in his efforts to console her.

"Be comforted, my Pauline," he said, "my absence will be of short duration—my danger scarcely worth a thought. Dispel your sorrow, as I do, in the hope of a rapid and safe return."

"I do seek support in hope, dear Randolph," replied Pauline; "and were you about to participate in perils less terrible than those of the battle-field, I should find solace in that resource; but in these frightful encounters, hope looks forbodingly upon me."

Captain Murray hastened to the hall door, where stood the expected Mr. Woodfall, listening for the distant sound of the expected horsemen. He implored Randolph not to depart until the arrival of the escort, while the fiery Malvern, impatient at delay, stood pawing the earth as if in reproach of the tardy persuasion of the host. The mind of Randolph, however, was too much occupied to permit him to afford much

attention to the representations of Mr. Woodfall. He was eager to plunge into the darkness of the night and be alone with his own thoughts. He grasped Mr. Woodfall's hand, and saying :

"Farewell, dear sir, we shall soon meet again."

He leaped upon his horse, and soon the only sound that broke the deep silence of the night was the echo of his swift courser's feet.

"Well, Groves," said Randolph, on entering the camp and encountering his cornet "so you did not send a guard to escort me through the pass?"

"No, no sir," replied that officer, smiling; "a messenger came into camp, pale and breathless, his horse covered with foam, enumerating the dangers that he had escaped, and to which you would be exposed; but he was too much of a coward to be heeded, and as no order came from you, I declined to act upon such information. The poor fellow was so terrified that I was induced to send a Corporal's guard to escort him back, though I could not learn that he encountered any thing in his journey here more frightful than the loneliness of the road. As to yourself, sir, I did not believe that those scoundrels would attempt to assail you again, after the example of the other night; but if they should, I knew that upon the back of that bold war-horse, you were equal to double the number that you defied when mounted upon that Woodfall colt."

Randolph soon retired to his tent to prepare for the morrow's duties by securing the rest he so much needed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRIGAND'S MOUNTAIN RETREAT.

IN a vault in the bowels of the earth, more fitted for a catacomb than a dwelling, sat a man of Herculean frame in deep meditation. His chair was a niche in the stone side of the gloomy cavern. His brows were knitted, deep furrows were

perceptible in the face, while his sunken eyes sparkled with impatient anger. The expression of the lower features of his visage was hidden by his ample moustache and beard, which wholly concealed his mouth. He wore upon his head a mole-skin cap fringed with portions of a wolf's hide, into which was inserted an eagle's feather, which remarkable head-gear was intended to be symbolical that its wearer would follow his enemies whether they retreated into the earth, the air, or were secreted in the forest.

This giant was Claudius Smith, the brigand chief of the Ramapo, but more familiarly spoken of as Claudie. He was greatly feared throughout all that wild section, and the terror of his name soon spread into more distant parts. His escapes had been so numerous and so marvellous, that the ignorant and credulous believed him to be endowed with more than mortal power. He had a formidable band of followers, who were well armed and rode horses of great speed, which, when worn and broken, they would exchange for others equally superior, stolen from those known to possess such animals, and who knew that to resist such marauders would be instant death. Claudie was contemned by the British, who regarded him as an energetic scout and active ally; but by the Americans he and his troop were despised as renegades and horse-thieves. They, however, feared both the chieftain and his men, and no one had the temerity to approach the Ramapo, or to seek his cattle if they were enticed to his rich pastures, for he might share their fate in being slain. Twice these bold villains had defeated the efforts of small detachments of the American army, commissioned for their suppression, and they had as often ably eluded the power of larger forces, so that their conquest was esteemed by many as impossible, and it was reported, among other wondrous stories, that Claudie could ride for miles beneath the hills of the Ramapo, and thus defy pursuit.

At some distance from this modern Samson, and in what might be deemed another apartment, as the rocky walls approached so near in the interval as to form a single open doorway, were grouped a number of the followers of this chief around a blazing fire, the smoke of which, ascending with the breeze, curled along the arched roof in search of some

aperture for escape. The men, grouped in various attitudes upon the hard, rough floor of the cave, were indulging in noisy, desultory conversation, varied by hideous roars of laughter; but the subject most interesting to the assemblage seemed to be a certain mug of some exhilarating beverage, which each disciple alternately grasped in his brawny hand, as if it contained the elixir for a better life, instead of the fluid of all evil. A thin curtain of mist interposed between the chief's stone-chair and his merry regues, and thus afforded a more graphic effect to the picture at the fire, when viewed through the vaulted arch. But he alone to whom this scene was available remained in his stern silence. The men, who knew that their chief had retired to his meditative chair, were not less vehement or boisterous in their language, and he would not, by a word, disturb the enjoyment of their revel. The mind of the chief, however, was inaccessible to ordinary influences when deeply occupied, for there was a power of concentration evidenced in his projecting brow, that might have fitted him at this great period of his country's trial for a valuable addition to her heroes, had he not become one of her outcasts.

In the midst of this clamor, at a sign from one of the number, silence was restored, and each man arose from his reclining position. The revelers filling up their drinking cups at a sign from the lieutenant, commenced singing the following words, while the vaults echoed the song in a voice of equal thunder:

Welcome, brethren of the sword,
Welcome beneath the earth;
Welcome to our watch and ward,
Thrice welcome to our mirth!
Our chieftain sits on his chair of stone,
To him a throne of state;
Behold! he sits in council alone—
Do off caps to our chief and mate!

During this song, a number of bandits, just in from duty, were seen advancing along the lengthy gallery of the cave, who when they reached the noisy assembly, raised their caps in air and bowed toward the arch, as a salute of courtesy to the thoughtful Claudie. Then, each of the new-comers receiving in his hand the brimming cup from one of his

companions who had thus welcomed him, joined heartily and lustily in the following chorus:

Let us quaff from the jug,
 The tankard or mug,
 And enjoy the sweets of the potion;
 For, in our struggles for pelf,
 We may encounter that elf
 Grim Death—who may gainsay the notion.

What more of rude sarcasm the other stanzas of this song might have contained on that great leveler, is yet unknown, for, while they paused for an instant to refresh their throats, ere they reached the coming verse, a voice thundered from the "chair of state," to which they had just before so courteously bowed:

"Ragues, is your own noise so great that you can not hear that a horse is in the ravine, while your own animals are all stabled?"

The response was in action. Not a word was spoken in reply to this reproach; but each man, casting down his drinking vessel, rushed hastily through the dark gallery, along which their brethren had so lately passed, and, in another instant, all was silent in that gloomy abode. The fire still burnt, and, as its fatal flame rose into the air, and light and shadow fell upon the rugged walls, they disclosed a retreat where nothing but shame and infamy could choose to abide.

The chieftain of the band remained in his stall of stone. His practiced ear had detected the footfalls of a horse in the vicinity of his haunt, and now that his men had gone in search, and would emerge into the air by numerous different routes that radiated in secret avenues at the end of the long gallery, he felt assured that he should soon have the delinquent in his grasp. He was not wrong. Ere long, he heard the tramp of his men about the gallery, and he knew by a peculiar signal that they had a prisoner. Soon he heard an exclamation;

"Why do you blind my eyes and bind my hands, and then lead me through these damp vaults, and over this rough path? I can not proceed, unless you give my limbs liberty and restore my sight."

No answer was vouchsafed; but two of the bandits, one on each side, held him by the arm, and supported him as well

as possible, till the prisoner stood before the chief. A lamp or two was now lighted, and when a little of the darkness was thus dispelled, the chieftain beheld his captive. The latter was a youth, apparently, of not more than seventeen years, attired in the costume of a British officer. His face was partly concealed from view by the bandage round his eyes, and his arms were so tightened to his sides by straps that they were powerless. After the chieftain had surveyed him a moment, he said, somewhat kindly:

"Who are you?"

"I will not deny my country nor my king," replied the prisoner, "but, did I call myself an American, my dress would belie my words."

"Oh, there ain't much now in dress," said the chief, kindly, "for whenever the Yankees fall in with a chest of clothes, they don't mind fighting the next battle in royal coats. But what brought you to this locality?"

"I bore dispatches up the Hudson from Sir Henry, and having discharged my public duty, I have permission to give attention to my private matters, and I now seek the assistance of Claudie and his men. But, why am I thus bound and blinded? If it were to conceal the mystery of this labyrinth through which I have traveled, it has succeeded, for I could not recognize a tenth of its mazy windings. I am in much pain from this needless treatment, and trust, whoever you may be, that you will give me liberty of sight at least."

"I am Claudie," responded the chieftain.

"Then I am safe," quickly rejoined the prisoner, "for I can, I know, confide in you."

"Remove the bandage and release his arms," ordered the giant.

A shudder passed over the adventurer as he found himself a prisoner in this dread fastness—a feeling that was not unnoticed by the many eyes that watched him.

"You dislike these halls, I see," said Claudie, "and you regard the tenants with no more favor; but you may dismiss your fears if you speak honestly, for then we are your friends; if falsely, we are your executioners."

"On the honor which I prize beyond life, I have no treacherous intent toward you."

"Then let us hear your mission, that we may judge," replied Claudie, in a softer tone.

The youth gazed upon the men that surrounded him and then upon the chieftain, who, perceiving that he thus silently objected to so large an audience, dismissed his followers. Not unwillingly, the benighted resumed their places by the fire to complete the pleasure of their cups.

"Now you may speak freely," said the chief. "What brought you here?"

"An affair of the heart—nothing else!" said the martial stripling, with downcast eyes and a blush upon his cheek.

"What? A love pilgrimage?" reiterated the astonished Claudie; "why, you must have mistaken the subterranean galleries of the Ramapo for the halls of Cupid! This must be some frolic of the merry garrison. Your brother officers taking advantage of your youth, are indulging their humor at your expense."

"My visit was unknown to all others," said the youth. "I came in my own interest, solely."

"Boy," said Claudie, with sharpness, "there is either wit or treachery in your errand. Be plainer, if you wish to escape mortification, perhaps trouble."

The youth, assuming a boldness that he did not feel, said:

"You are esteemed in the British army as a fearless man. Sir Henry Clinton has no less confidence in your loyalty. Knowing that you stand thus high in the opinions of those of mature judgment than my own, and that you had done good service to the royal cause, and being deeply enamored with a lady in this district, I resolved to implore your aid in the prosecution of my suit, and am here to do so!"

"That's to the point," said the conciliated Claudie. "A British soldier may ever command a helping hand from Claudie and his men, where it can be afforded without outrage to their own interests and their duty to Sir Henry, so that if you want free passage to this lady, you shall have it. I will see that you are not molested on the road."

"I do not ask to be guided to her presence," replied the youth, "for I am not an accepted suitor! Therein lies my trouble."

"You surely will not ask me to plead your cause," rejoined Claudie, "for, where your handsome face would be dismissed, the rough pleadings in your behalf of the Ranger of the Ramapo would be but little heeded."

"I did not think to ask such service of you," observed the prisoner, with a smile; "but I am annoyed to learn that she has preferred the suit of another, to whom she affects devotion—a Yankee officer."

"That lessens the chance of your success, if the rival is a gallant fellow," said Claudie.

"It is this rivalry that nerves me to what I contemplate," vociferated the youth, with an energy that astounded Claudie. "I would tear her false heart from her fair bosom, rather than my rival should receive her hand!"

"Boy!" exclaimed the chief, in reproof; "you do not think of murder, to heal the wound in your heart?"

"No, no," interposed the youth, in haste, "not that," and a shudder passed through his frame, as if he revolted from such a horror, "only—only—abduction. To seize her—bear her away from his presence, and to place her under my own influence."

"Abduction is base service for honest soldiers to perform. My men are not schooled in it."

"Suppose this rival were an enemy of yours," he asked, "would you forego this opportunity to revenge your wrongs as well as mine?"

"I might," responded Claudie, "if he were a worthy foe."

"One," continued the youth, regardless of his response, "who has hunted you up and down the country and through the forest, and who has offered a reward for your head as if you were a wolf. One who has, on one occasion, followed you to the very mouth of these caverns, who has slain some of your best men, and who only awaits a fitting opportunity to resume the search."

The youth paused. He saw that he had disturbed the placid feelings of the chief. He perceived his brawny hand involuntarily traveling over the hilt of the dagger in his belt, and that his disinclination had disappeared before the stronger feeling of revenge.

"Who is this man?" exclaimed the brigand. "Let me

bear his name, for, as my enemies rise up they pass away, and I will see that this villain soon joins his confederates."

"If I reveal his name for purposes of my own, promise me that he shall not be injured by you or your men; but, that his punishment, if taken, shall be wholly left to me. Fear not but that he will suffer more acutely than by death."

"I think I may with safety commit my vengeance to the merciless feelings of a jealous rival," said Claudie. "Hence, I promise."

"Know you Randolph Murray?" asked the youth.

"Is it he?" exclaimed Claudie, dashing his hand with violence upon his knee. "By all the powers of earth, I've promised rashly, for his hand is crimsoned with my brother's blood, and he would surely have fallen, had he not moved off to Peekskill."

"But your word?" suggested the youth.

"Shall not be forfeited," replied the chief; "it will be cheering to behold his torture, as well as to shed his blood. But the girl—who is she?"

"Is one Pauline Woodfall," replied the youth.

"Is that the nymph who has lighted such a fire of frenzy in your young heart?" said the chief.

"I am resolved to *force* her from the arms of Randolph Murray," said the youth.

"No better time than while he is away," remarked the chief.

"But will you afford me your assistance?" asked the youth.

"The more heartily that I owe a debt of vengeance to old Woodfall," replied the chief. "He spirited this dragoon Captain away from my grasp, on his own horse."

"This night?" said the youth.

"To-night? So soon?" replied Claudie. "You're deliberate in your love; but a good soldier would not delay to darkness what could be as well performed by day. I know the ground, and have the plan already clearly formed. After it fails will be time to try the game at night. She must be decoyed by some device *beyond* the grounds and garden into the wood, where she can be easily seized. Will you perform that delicate task yourself, or will you permit one of my men the honor of encircling the maiden's waist? I think you're

scarcely equal to the effort to raise her to and retain her on your horse?"

"I will submit all to your arrangement," said the youth, while a blush suffused his cheeks. "I would not endanger success by a false jealousy of those who contribute to my happiness."

"Well said," replied Claudie; "never ask confidence where you can not concede it." Uttering a peculiar signal, a tall man approached through the archway from the fire. "Flash," he continued, "in another hour, take half a dozen men and repair to our rendezvous in Woodfall's coppice, and there await my coming."

The lieutenant departed, and then the huge chieftain, rising from his chair, invited his young guest to join him in some refreshment before they proceeded on their expedition.

CHAPTER VII.

IN DURANCE VILE.

RANDOLPH MURRAY had now been absent several weeks, but at the end of each he had forwarded by special messenger across those dreary plains letters to his beloved Pauline. He also inclosed separate notes for Mr. Woodfall, relating the military news and some anecdotes of the colt that he had in his charge, and how it lightened the labors of the ever-ready Malvern. The old gentleman received them with great pleasure, and learned to await their arrival with great eagerness. More than a week had passed since Randolph's last dispatch; but he had prepared Pauline for a long interval, as he was ordered on some distant duty. On the tenth morning she rose sad and melancholy. The night had been sleepless, and the day was even more irksome than the darkness. There was a depression upon her mind that she could not dispel. Mr. Woodfall, perceiving her unsettled state, made every effort to divert her; but this kind attention gave her additional pain, for it was evident that she had not been

sufficiently careful to conceal her sorrow. In the afternoon she sought the solitude of the garden. There she had roamed with Randolph, and there she had first heard those words of love which chained her heart to his and made their destinies one.

Pauline had been walking in deep reverie for some time, when she was aroused from her thoughts by the sound of a strange voice. Looking upward, she beheld, standing upon a hill which flanked the garden-fence, a gentleman in military costume. She was indignant that the privacy of her walk should thus be invaded, and was about to retire to the house, when the person moved along the hill in the direction she had taken, and when within hearing, said :

"Lady, I fear that a misconstruction has been put upon my presence ; but I am guilty of neither impertinence nor curiosity in being here. Pause, I pray, and hear me, for I come from Captain Murray."

Pauline, who was retreating more rapidly as the stranger spoke, stopped instantly at the sound of that magic name, and looked scrutinizingly upon the speaker, waiting his approach. Nearing her and raising his cap, he said :

"Lady, my misjudged efforts to attract attention were nearly punished by defeat, which might have been a matter of lamentation to both yourself and he whom I strive to serve. I am the bearer of letters from Captain Murray."

"Thanks, generous soldier," replied the now joyous Pauline, "letters from Captain Murray are pearls of price to us ; but we must receive you at the house. The path upon the hill from which you have descended, leads to the entrance-door. My father and I will meet you there, and will give you such a welcome as every friend of Randolph must command."

"I am constrained to decline your hospitality," rejoined the stranger. "You perceive that I am a *British* officer, and, if detected within these lines, my life will be forfeited. But my pledge to Captain Murray has been redeemed."

"Is Randolph, then, a prisoner in your camp?" exclaimed Pauline, in alarm.

"No, no," replied the stranger, hurriedly, "he is not our prisoner ; but I can not remain to relate how I am become his courier."

"I am grateful for his safety," replied Pauline, with clasped and uplifted hands; then, advancing toward the messenger, she continued: "If you decline our entertainment, I must receive your letters in whatever manner you may please, although I would rather that they should be handed to me openly at the door, than clandestinely by the garden-fence."

"Lady, you are spared the latter painful ordeal," replied the stranger, with some sarcasm, "for your letters are deposited beneath a chair in the upland wood beyond the garden, where, if I remember rightly, you met Captain Murray at an early period of your acquaintance."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the agitated Pauline; "you can not have been so gratuitously cruel. The place is as unsafe as the ravine of the Ramapo, and almost the last promise I made to Randolph before we parted, was never to venture near that fearful wood."

"And almost the last words he said to me at parting," said the stranger, "was to place there the letters and then warn you of it. I have done so at the hazard of my life. Seek them or reject them, as you please. See, yonder is a horseman; he rides this way. Should he spy me, you may have the opportunity of seeing your Randolph's messenger suspended from a tree within view of your own garden. Farewell, fair lady, I have discharged my duty, though you scruple to do yours."

The stranger then disappeared in a hollow in the hill, and the horseman, proceeding in a different direction, was seen no more. So sudden and strange had been the appearance and the exit of this strange messenger, that Pauline paused to consider whether it were a vision of her troubled mind, or whether the scene had positively occurred. When she was convinced that all was real, then came the agonizing reflection of the deposit of the letters, and by what means they were to be obtained.

"Oh, Randolph," exclaimed the despairing girl, "why are those dear letters placed thus cruelly on forbidden ground, to decoy me from my duty to my pledge? You could not believe that I could from morn till night sit viewing the spot where so much solace to my poor heart lies hidden and not rescue them? Ah, now I see more clearly, Randolph; it is

out a merry jest of yours to place me in a strait of circumstances, so that, act as I may, I am open to your pardonable reproach! If I decide to abandon the letter to its fate, you will then taunt me with indifference and neglect. If I boldly walk to this dreaded goal and seize my letter, then you will upbraid me for my disobedience. But you will chide me kindly, Randolph; and will hereafter smile at the difficulty I have in making an election. Yet, I *must* have the letters! The feelings of my heart demand it—it is needful to my life. There is no danger in the little journey, and I will at once commence it."

Pauline then passed through the garden and along the grounds, until she reached the outer edge of the wood. She had some hundreds of yards yet to ascend before she could attain the spot where the letters were deposited, and her courage seemed to fail. She gazed toward the wood. All was silent—not a leaf was stirring, and yet she could not advance. She looked back in the direction of the house; the distance seemed nothing—all promised security, and she would not retreat without her prize.

"There is something in my breast that premonishes me of coming danger," said Pauline, as she stood thus between the forbidden wood and her dear home, "but I know that it is but some vagrant feeling of timidity, common to my sex. The promised bride of the dauntless Randolph Murray must not be defeated in her object by this base hesitation. I will not be the creature of cowardly impulse."

Then the devoted girl pressed forward to the wood. The distance was soon overcome, the old chair came in view, and, beneath it, lay the prize for which she had so valiantly contended. She grasped it in her hand. She pressed it to her heart and to her lips. It seemed to her precious beyond all previous missives of that dear hand.

"I feel," exclaimed the exulting Pauline, as she pressed the letter closer to her bosom, "like one who, having obtained a mighty victory, removes the treasure to examine in an hour of greater privacy. I hold the fruits of victory in my hand, dear Randolph, and I will hasten home and enjoy them as a conqueror."

These words of triumph had scarcely left her lips when her

waist was encircled by the arm of a powerful man. Despite her struggles and her screams of terror, she was borne further into the labyrinth of the fatal wood, where she fainted upon the shoulder of her captor.

"To horse, to horse, brave boy!" exclaimed the abductor, "you came well upon the scene. Be careful of your captive, and dash forward to the cave with all your speed. The gaps and passes on your road are well held by my pickets, so that you will meet with no annoyance. Hold firmly to your charge, and deliver her the instant you reach the cave to our Dame Hogget. Captain Henry will you ride with me, or with the trooper who bears your lady?"

"I think that my duty leaves me no alternative," replied the young Captain, to Claudie, who addressed him, he being no other than the young officer who had lured the eager Pauline to the wood.

Forward they rode at a rapid pace. The horseman who bore the senseless Pauline in his arms led the way, followed closely by Henry, while Claudie brought up the rear. The road was admirably guarded, sentinels being placed at all the gaps and defiles to secure a safe retreat. In a short time the whole troop reached the recesses of the Ramapo. Obedient to his trust, the trooper delivered his still unconscious charge into the arms of Hogget, who had been apprised by the chief that such a novelty would reach the retreat during the day.

This Hogget was the only female in the cavern. She was upward of fifty years of age, but possessed the active energy of thirty. She was plain even to unsightliness—her face was very small, her nose of masculine prominence; her cheekbones were very lofty, and her eyes diminutive and deeply sunken beneath her projecting brows. This peculiar woman had long sojourned in this savage and notorious region. She loved a subsoil life, and preferred the damp, dark caverns of the Ramapo to a dwelling on its surface. Yet she had one of the kindest hearts in nature, and her winning manners and exhaustless resources in administering solace, were so irresistible that none despaired beneath her treatment.

This was the woman to whom the care of Pauline was committed, and well was it that the helpless maid was placed

under such guardianship as could protect her from the wild, lawless occupants of her prison. But Hogget was devoted to the brigand chief. She believed him to be a hero, acting well his allotted part in the great struggle to repress treason to the king. Thus, when she received in her arms the senseless Pauline, she felt that there was some good reason for this seeming violence, even though cruel to the fair sufferer herself. She therefore conveyed Pauline to a small chamber or grotto, which was lighted by a lamp and blazing fire, and placing her upon the bed, all prepared, resorted to those remedies of her simple pharmacy that soon afforded evidences of reanimation, little thinking, in her busy love, of the horror of approaching consciousness.

While the motherly dame was exerting herself to solace her charge, Claudie and the young officer sat in privacy beside a fire in one of the many cells in this roomy homestead. The brigand was enjoying his evening pipe, and in a hollow in the rock behind him was placed a cask of liquor, from which, occasionally, he sipped. The British Captain, however, indulged in neither; he seemed to eschew these luxuries of a cavern residence, in opposition to the persuasion of his host.

"I wish you would smoke or take a cup of Hollands," remarked Claudie, "for although you may avoid these habits when on garrison duty, you will yield at least to the pipe when ordered to camp life. But I see that you are impatient at this continued importunity, and therefore I will change the subject of our conversation to one nearer to your heart. What is the next step in reference to this stolen beauty?"

"What step would you suggest?" replied Henry.

"I did not anticipate such a question," remarked Claudie; "but there is no difficulty in the answer—"

"My object is to ascertain if you and I concur on such a subject," interposed Henry.

"Then I propose marriage," said the chief. "If you love the girl as well as the man with whose name we baited the trap into which she fell, you will of course take the prize to yourself."

"Marriage!" exclaimed the youth. "I had not thought of that."

"Is it distasteful to you, now that you have the bird within your net?" demanded Claudie, impatiently.

"No, no," exclaimed Henry, his really beautiful face now crimsoned with the deepest hue of shame; "but a clergyman, a church, the preparations, the ceremony. Impossible!"

"Not so impossible as you think, my friend, if your heart be in the right place," said Claudie, ejecting heavy clouds of smoke from his lips. "We have all the materials necessary for the whole performance. In the first place, we have a chamber dedicated as a chapel, used for no other purpose than the burial of our dead, it is true, for marriage is forbidden in our fraternity. I wish we had the same constraint on death. Then one of our gallant brethren once wore the cassock in a foreign land. He still has his ritual, and will perform the service with the solemnity of the fattest priest in Christendom."

The young officer had listened to this proposal with agitation. His face was now wholly concealed between his hands, and the chief relapsed into silence. A few moments passed, when, as if he would object to the summary forms thought sufficient by the chief, Henry said, in a voice that disclosed the intensity of his feelings:

"But how is the lady to be induced to accept me? *I* am wholly unequal to the task of forcing her."

"That is a matter certainly usually undertaken by the suitor," replied the chief; "but as you appear to have no taste for such a privilege, even that I will provide for. Hogget shall plead your cause. I will instruct her in a manner that her very soul shall be enlisted in our success, and then you may be assured that she will not be defeated. She is a woman of remarkable powers; but has no knowledge that she possesses them. In many things she rules me against my will; and although I often resolve that this shall no longer be, when she appears, her influence is irresistible. It is so with this wild flock of mine; she is more their chief than I. Perhaps you had better retire for a few minutes, for I have summoned Hogget by a signal only known among us. Be near, however, that you may meet her, and say to her some words of courtesy or kindness, and let her judge whether the intended bridegroom is not well worthy of the bride."

The young man rushed from the place as Hogget entered. What passed at the interview he did not learn ; but, obedient to the desire of Claudie, he intercepted the female as she left the chief, and, placing his hand upon her shoulder, said :

" Good Hogget, do your best offices for me with that sweet lady. Let her see the imprudence of remaining here a day without some better protection than her own innocence. That is but a sorry weapon in a secret cavern, amid a band of wild, reckless men. It ought to seem to her a question admitting of but one solution."

Hogget caught the hand of Henry and pressed it between hers, saying :

" The lady is in a refreshing sleep ; but when she wakes, I'll fulfill the captain's directions. 'Tis quite as you say, and no doubt this sweet young girl will think so, when she comes to remember her position. She talks of one Randolph, who, I know, is the captain's enemy and seeks his life. She ought to forget one who is capable of such villainy."

The remarkable Hogget triumphed. She actually won the consent of Pauline to be the wife of Captain Henry on two conditions, that she should not meet him except at the altar in the chapel, and that she should not meet him after, so long as she remained in the cave.

" What think you of these conditions ?" asked Claudie of the young man, as they again sat in the same cell, two days after.

" I subscribe to them," replied the Briton, evidently pleased.

" With a readiness unworthy of a bridegroom," rejoined the chief.

" I have my revenge on Murray."

" Has, then, your love for the girl, thus settled into hatred for the man ?" asked Claudie. " It is I who thirst for revenge."

" Hear me, bold Ranger of the Ramapo," interposed Captain Henry, dangerously using a title of which it was the chief's weakness to be proud. " It is far from me to provoke one who has so much befriended me ; but I implore you to let Randolph Murray be dealt with only by myself, and your revenge, however deep it be, will be amply gratified. Soon I shall take another step in my vengeance on this fierce trespasser ; let me pursue him until he or I may fall."

Claudie was reconciled.

At length the hour arrived for the meeting in the chapel. Steps were heard in the narrow vestibule that conducted to the place, and soon appeared in the doorway Pauline, leaning on the arm of Hogget. She was very beautiful, but pallid as a ghost. There was firmness in her eye, but feebleness in her frame, and she must have fallen to the floor had not Hogget supported her. A chill of repulsion rushed through the veins, even of those wild men who lined the rocky walls, and all believed that the funeral service would quickly follow that of marriage. Captain Henry, with some feeling, advanced to take her hand; but she waved him from her with pride and indignation, and pointed to the table behind which stood the spurious priest. Then, casting her eyes upon the hard features of those who had assembled to witness her execution, she signed to Hogget to lead her where the bridegroom awaited the sacrifice, and the ceremony commenced. It was soon concluded; then her firmness yielded to the feelings of her heart. She fell upon her knees, and with uplifted and clasped hands, exclaimed:

"Oh, Randolph, Randolph! this hateful perjury is for thy honor as well as mine. I thus make the lesser sacrifice to avoid the greater evil, that I may enter the unseen world to which I am bound, as unsullied as when I pledged you my heart."

She would have fallen upon the floor had not Hogget, who had not left her side for a moment, raised her in her arms to bear her from the chapel. The only sound that for some moments disturbed the silence was the echo of her receding footsteps.

The silent crowd then dispersed. There was neither marriage feast nor marriage congratulations. The stolen bride was reconducted to her prison, and the heartless bridegroom withdrew from the society of those rugged villains, who evidently did not approve of such proceedings as they had just witnessed.

"I almost wish," said Claudie, when he and Henry returned to their cell, "that we had been less harsh with that poor girl."

"What?" exclaimed the young husband, "with that eternal cry of 'Randolph' in her throat?"

"Who, I fear, is so deeply rooted in her heart that there is no room for you," observed the chief.

"I care not, personally, for her love," was the reply to this taunt; "but I do desire to force Randolph Murray from her thoughts."

They were interrupted, however, by the appearance of Hogget, to announce the dangerous state of Pauline. Under this nurse's instructions Henry quitted the cavern to procure such medical comforts as were required in her simple but efficient treatment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT VISIT TO PAULINE.

CAPTAIN MURRAY crossed the Hudson without accident, and reached the army at Peckskill in time to swell its volume before the arrival of the British. Captain Horton, however, had outstripped him in the chase, having arrived the day before; but the immediate and severe cavalry duties of Randolph forbade the meeting of these friends. Twelve hours after Murray's advent the British host appeared. Their numerous vessels covered the waters of the Hudson, and it was now evident that their force was more formidable than was anticipated.

The untiring Washington, with his usual caution, watched his enemy unceasingly. He sent scouting parties to every practicable landing-place, to guard against any effort at a flank movement—a species of craft rarely omitted when Sir Henry Clinton was on the war-path. On this occasion, however, the wily commandant was minutely watched, that this sparkling feature in his tactics might be defeated. He was compelled to advance boldly to the front and anchor before Peckskill. There was no city to besiege; Peckskill was then but a petty village—and the artillery of Washington was of too small caliber to oppose the enemy's landing. The British soldiers were poured from the vessels to the banks in safety.

Washington retired as the enemy formed and advanced until he reached the surrounding heights, where he gave evidence that he would accept the gage of battle; but the sun went down upon the adverse armies while the sword was in the scabbard, the British contenting themselves with the occupation of the lower range of hills and the flats.

The night, however, was not devoid of martial incident. In that short period of hazy beauty between the setting of the sun and darkness, the vigilant Randolph had observed a detachment of British infantry making its stealthy way toward a pass in the hills, thought to be too distant to need guarding. He saw in an instant the danger, for he had no doubt that other troops would follow this vanguard in the greater obscurity of night. He dispatched a messenger to head-quarters, and with fearless energy prepared to attack this force with the few men at his disposal. He perceived in this movement a repetition of the successful strategy at the battles of Long Island and the Brandywine, and he knew that if he fell in the attack, the report of fire-arms in the engagement would announce the detection of the scheme and thus defeat its object. The country was unfavorable for horse; but Randolph was not discouraged. He procured a trusty guide, and started to intercept the stealthy foe. By an oblique and hasty march he hoped to reach a point in the narrow road ahead of the enemy, and thus dispose his men for their reception; but he was delayed by the difficulties of night travel, and the belligerents arrived at the spot at the same moment. Randolph saw that his plan of surprise was frustrated, and, disdaining to retreat with an undrawn sword, he gave the word to charge, and dashed upon the enemy with an impetuosity that produced slaughter and confusion. But the British had not intrusted this important enterprise to weak hands. The enemy had a leader as gallant as himself, who soon detected the inferiority of the assailing force, rallied his broken men, and conducted his dispositions with such skill and energy, that Murray, in spite of the havoc of his sabers, found himself nearly surrounded by superior numbers. Then was the intrepid nature of this unconquerable spirit fully displayed. He smiled upon the artful maneuver of his rival, as he gazed upon the forest of muskets in his rear. Danger was his element.

"Soldiers," he cried, at the moment when the British thought he was preparing to yield, "those who have not the courage and strength of lions would perish on the field; but you have these qualities and will follow me. Our road lies *through* these bayonets, where I will lead!"

He described with his sword the fatal route, and, as a cheer of exultation greeted his ear, he gave rein to the fearless Malvern and dashed forward to the charge followed by his devoted men. The ranks of the enemy, veterans though they were, could not withstand the impetuosity of these undaunted horse-men. The British shrunk before them, and Randolph thus gained for his valorous troop a place of safety. In the mean time, without commotion in the camp, a company of infantry was dispatched to support the attack of Randolph, and, if possible, to capture the adventurous detachment of the enemy. This was led by Horton, who, impelled by both his courage and the warmth of friendship, urged his men forward at their greatest speed; but he arrived only in time to be the first to congratulate his friend upon his bold deliverance, for the English leader, finding that his secret movement was disclosed, moved off in close retreat. The friends perceived that it was fruitless to follow them. This was the only incident of life and death in the long-planned invasion of the shores of Peckskill, for, on the dawn of the following morning, instead of advancing upon the Americans as was anticipated, the foe, after destroying the village and all the property in their power, returned to their ships, and floated down the river upon the ebbing tide. It was a Quixotic exploit, as barren of fame to British arms as to British sagacity.

The enemy gone, there was no impediment to the reunion of friends, and Randolph and Alfred met daily at each other's quarters. The former disclosed his relations to Pauline, while the latter, no less candid, avowed his affection for the erring Amy Ward, expressing his fears that she regarded him with no other feeling than that of gratitude.

"And is not gratitude premonitory of a yet deeper, holier passion, if it is permitted to develop?" demanded Randolph.

"Perhaps it is," replied Alfred, "but the trifling service I have rendered places me in a delicate relation to Miss Ward. I cannot presume to press my suit *because* of my service."

"You have no need to press your suit. It will do its own work. Amy Ward's is a fiery nature, but controlled by letting it have its own way. Only be sure to show your appreciation of her, and you will some day be surprised by an evidence of her *gratitude* in the shape of a love declaration to you." Murray talked as if he had made a close study of the subject.

The two friends became mutually happier, knowing that each understood the other fully.

As it was not probable that any further attempt would be repeated by the British in this locality, it was thought that General Washington would again disperse the army in fragments upon the banks of the Hudson, where they might more readily be supplied with necessaries, and yet rapidly concentrated as at Peekskill. Murray and Horton not only remembered their former agreeable vicinity to each other, but both were attracted to the spot they had so lately quitted by other endearments. They anxiously desired to reoccupy their old encampments, and Randolph had determined to ask of his superior, if his military arrangements would admit of this indulgence, when a secret enterprise was suggested to him, in which he resolved to embark—the surprise of Paulus' Hook.

The midnight capture of Stony Point, by General Wayne, was ringing in the soldiers' ears, and fitted them for other desperate undertakings, when intelligence was received of the insecure manner in which this fortress was guarded by the English. The destruction of Stony Point was a fruitless lesson to these idle warders, who, believing themselves beyond an enemy's sword, yielded to the indolence instead of maintaining the watchfulness of garrison life. As soon as this incursion became known, an assault was resolved upon, not with any desire to occupy the fortress, for that was impossible; but merely to exhibit another evidence of the daring character of the American soldier as he struggled for the right of nationality. Randolph communicated to Alfred his resolution, who insisted upon being received as a volunteer. This request could not be denied. Good men were required for this desperate service, and Randolph's experience supplied him with no knowledge of a better one than his friend.

The day of the departure of this expedition was yet unnamed, when Randolph, fearing exaggerated reports might

possibly reach Pauline, sat down to advise her of his secret enterprise, and to caution her against surprise at any momentary suspension of his messages to her. We may quote from his epistle:

"I must not omit to tell you, sweet Pauline, that the other day I was complimented in words of high encomium by General Washington. I should have been prouder of this honor had I merited the distinction. He praised me for my daring in an attack, when, in a subsequent cross-examination of myself, I had admitted—to myself—that I had acted with imprudence. Then he spoke admiringly of my coolness and resource in the moment of great peril, while my incitement to desperate action in reality was dread of a British prison. I received these marks of his approbation with uncovered head and modest mien; but I concealed the motives that I have confessed to you; though I trust you will not use this candor to my prejudice!

"The General judged me from *results*; I convicted myself on a knowledge of motives that he could not fathom; I ungenerously declined to afford him my assistance, and the consequence is, that I am preferred to a duty of great trust. When I return from that, I shall presume still farther on his kindness, and petition to be again allowed to return to my old camp, within a charming ride of what I most love on earth.

"I hope to obtain the same privilege for Horton and his valiant men. He, like myself, is enthusiastic in reference to the Ramapo valley; but apart from the hills, the valleys, and the trees, he has a penchant for something still more beautiful than is hidden there; but, as if the fowler gave warning to his victim he might never catch his bird, I must not be less mysterious to you.

Ever yours, RANDOLPH."

This Randolph dispatched by his trusty messenger, and then, with a gaiety he had not experienced for many days, he rallied Alfred upon the subject so near his heart, spoke with confidence of his ability to procure a reinstatement in their old camp grounds, when, if he feared to venture upon a wiser plan, he might employ Old Elsie, to convert, by her enchantments, the gratitude of Amy into love.

It was now the middle of August, and it was resolved that the attack on Parker's Hook should be made on the night of

the twelfth. Three hundred picked men were detailed for this daring enterprise, among whom was the troop of Randolph's dragoons. The utmost secrecy and discrimination were used in the preparations, that the movement might be withheld from the knowledge of the enemy; while the better to cover the departure of the men with greater plausibility, it was made known that they were mustered for service on a foraging excursion, a circumstance of frequent occurrence. The men were conveyed to a certain point, and thence they were to march to Paulus' Hook. The road was between the Hudson and the Hackensack rivers, upon a belt of wooded heights, and so rugged and difficult that they moved with great labor. It was a privilege to behold these gallant people struggling forward in the night. The officers watched them attentively. They withheld every word of cheer or encouragement, desirous to leave them to their own innate courage. This did not fail. Although the path was scarcely practicable and caused much delay, every obstacle was surmounted.

Instead, however, of being midnight when they reached the Hook, the conjectured hour of their arrival, it was three in the morning; but they were not dismayed. They would not abandon their well-planned scheme because it was three hours nearer to the rising of the sun than they had hoped. They marched boldly forward. All circumstances, however, were not unpropitious. A party had quitted the Hook the previous day on a foraging excursion, and the listless sentinels, too long accustomed to a laxity of discipline, imagining that the armed men whom they sleepily regarded were their returning companions, admitted them without challenge, so that, before the slumbering garrison was aroused, Randolph and his brave supporters were in possession of the fortress! The commandant leaped from his bed of slumber, and, more brave than vigilant, collected about sixty of his wondering men and threw himself into a block-house, and there commenced a harmless fire. Randolph made no attempt to dislodge them. His *coup de main* was crowned with triumph, and he would not waste the precious hours of victory in profitless contention for this section of a conquest that he intended to abandon soon after sunrise. But as an evidence of his daring prowess, he seized one hundred and fifty of the garrison, destroyed the

guns of this isolated stronghold, then setting fire to all the stores and property he could not bear away, with his prisoners he commenced his retreat. It was now daylight, and the insignificance of the force with which he had effected this surprise could no longer be concealed. There was, therefore, great peril in this backward movement; but this in a measure had been foreseen, and to meet every possible contingency, boats had been ordered to a place known as Dow's Ferry, in order that any pursuit might be defeated by a recourse to the river. Hither Randolph marched his men; but when these gallant travelers reached the place, not a boat was in attendance! The disappointment was great but was manfully endured. The danger was now increased, for there was no alternative but to retrace the narrow neck which conducted to the ferry, at the imminent risk of encountering the foraging party of the enemy, which had not then returned to Paulus' Hook. There was another cause of alarm, more distant, possibly, but no less certain. The flames of the burning fortress would act as a beacon to the garrisons and ships below, which would not fail to send immediate relief. Still, the courage of the hour was sustained by the victories of the past. The men were proud of their commander, and he could estimate the valor of his soldiers, so that in this pleasing confidence, both marched on in the cheering conviction that he was equal to the difficulties in his path. At this crisis, however, relief appeared, welcome as a well of water in the arid desert. A worthy brother officer, knowing the difficulties of the expedition, assembled what men he could and marched so as to cover their retreat. This kindly foresight enabled the now jaded soldiers to move less rapidly, and to reach their quarters in safety. The tidings of the assault soon spread. The country was electrified at the gallantry of its soldiery. It was said that ancient deeds of arms were emulated in such exploits, and this affair at Paulus' Hook was ranked by many with the achievement of Wayne at Stony Point a few weeks earlier. Be this as it may, it is one of those incidents, which, without political consequence, is highly illustrative of the capabilities of the people when war develops their energies, and can not be read in our exciting times without kindling a spirit of emulation and devotion to country, which was the germ of victory in that great struggle.

CHAPTER IX.

GRATITUDE NOT LOVE.

As soon as the excitement of this bold adventure to Paulus' Hook had passed away, Randolph began to feel increased anxiety to revisit Pauline, and, as a period of inaction was likely to ensue, he determined to solicit that indulgence alluded to in his last letter to Pauline. He therefore promptly wrote to the General, asking if, in the approaching quartering of troops, it was compatible with the service and not adverse to his wishes, that both himself and Captain Horton could be permitted to occupy the camps from which they had so recently been withdrawn. He intimated that the district was infested by cowboys and a half-military organization, ready for every species of villainy which resulted in profit to themselves, and that, in his opinion, the inhabitants required the protection of a military force when such guardianship could be afforded without injury to the national cause. A reply reached him with military promptness, which acknowledged an obligation for his information, and contained an assurance that Captain Horton should at once be ordered to his former encampment; but as the urgency of the service still required a few officers well known to fame, to remain for a time in the more immediate vicinity of head-quarters, it was necessary that his own removal should be deferred a few weeks later.

This was very flattering to the soldier, but sadly unappreciated by the lover. His "ruling passion," now, was love, not fame; and it seemed harsh that he should be constrained to suffer for a dignity of character he did not care to estimate. Thus the lively hope of so quickly being restored to the society of Pauline, was again condemned to slumber in the heart whence it had been prematurely summoned. As Randolph sat brooding over his misfortunes, Captain Horton entered his tent. There was a joyous smile upon his face, but it vanished as he perceived the mortification expressed on the visage of his friend.

"Ah, Alfred," said Randolph, affecting an ease of manner,

"I learn from your sparkling eyes intelligence that it is needless for your tongue to speak. You are ordered to Orange county."

"And you, my worthy Randolph?" said Alfred, interrogatively.

"Oh," replied Randolph, handing his friend the letter he had just received, "I am considered by my superior officers to be a man of such distinction as to be retained here in wretchedness a few weeks longer. If they really wish to do me honor they should render it less equivocally."

"You speak in the bitterness of a painful moment, Randolph," said Alfred, resting his hand familiarly upon his friend's shoulder; "on an hour's reflection, you will do more justice to these ingenuous men. Their conduct must not be the less esteemed because it is irreconcilable with ardent desires which they know not to exist, and even if they did, a week or two of delay will be gladly acceded to by the expectant Pauline, to meet you with such credentials in your hands."

"I will strive to think with you, Alfred," said the disappointed dragoon officer; "but this continued absence, especially unemployed, is difficult to endure. Yet there is still one cheering circumstance—you will now be able to prosecute your suit. Amy Ward knows how to value a true soldier and a worthy man; she will not fail to accept the flattering distinction of your choice."

"I wish my heart was refreshed with the same confidence," was the response; "but its fears are in the van, and a sad troop of doubts, surmises, and mistrusts bring up the rear."

"Banish them all, my friend," exclaimed Randolph, with energy, "your heart should be sustained by a worthier company than the conscripts you have named. He who could, like yourself, enter Pauline's Hook with unshrinking nerve, surely ought not to fear to approach a woman's heart!"

The two friends passed that evening together. Randolph charged Alfred with a lengthy epistle for his beloved Pauline, charged Alfred with stating that he, like men generally who had suddenly risen to eminence, had been compelled to subdue his ardent self-feelings to the exigencies of state, and thus sent Captain Horton as ambassador before him to announce his

advent ; that he should follow when an officer of equal qualifications could be chosen to perform his duties, which consisted chiefly in a daily ride between Peekskill and head-quarters—"a measured distance of four miles out and back."

The next morning Horton commenced his march toward the Ramapo, and on the evening of the following day he reached his head-quarters. A quietude reigned over the spot congenial to his feelings ; he felt more happy, and more hopeful, as if inspiration was in the very air. The subsequent day was occupied in duties incumbent upon an officer ; but, these discharged, he resolved that his earliest visit should be to the house of Squire Ward.

Accordingly, performing his toilet with unusual care, he mounted his horse and directed his way toward the Ward homestead. It was a fine September morning ; the sun was shining brightly, chasing with its fiery beams the vapors from valley and mountain. It was a wild, beautiful, and peaceful scene ; and, as the wisest are apt to court some cheering omen as a great event approaches, so Alfred Horton accepted this smile of nature as flattering to his mission. He did not urge his horse ; but enjoyed the solitude at a slow pace, doubtless, like a conceited lover, drilling himself in lessons of elocution for the approaching interview—as if such a heart as Amy Ward's was to be stormed and captured by words ! In the midst of his reveries he suddenly espied a horseman crossing the country not very distant in his front. The rider evidently was a young person. He rode a good horse, but, what was most astonishing, he wore the undress of a British officer ! Alfred, like a cautious soldier, drew rein, and scanned as much of the country as was unhidden by brush and wood, impressed with the belief that an unsupported enemy would not venture into these parts ; but nothing met his eye.

The resolution of the Captain was soon taken. He determined to capture the officer, and, with this intention, he moved forward at a brisker pace, concealing himself and horse as well as possible beneath the foliage of the surrounding trees. He thus approached almost within pistol-shot of the adventurous Briton ere he was perceived. The horseman then becoming alarmed, put spurs to his spirited horse and dashed forward at its utmost speed. Alfred, though annoyed,

was not defeated. He was on the stranger's trail in an instant, and a most exciting chase commenced. Both had good horses; both rode well; but the flying Briton was by far the lighter weight, and to a spectator this would have seemed the winning feature of the race. The pace became terrific. The stranger, leaning forward almost upon his fleet horse's neck, used neither heel or whip. Alfred was less forbearing. He kept his spurs close to his courser's sides. Still he could not gain an inch. That cool, effortless stranger maintained his distance, and yet seemed to reserve his horse for greater speed. Alfred became enraged at being thus quietly defied by a mere stripling, and, grasping a pistol from his holster, shouted:

"Halt! or I will fire."

The wind, which blew freshly at their backs, wafted this message to the flying man; but neither by word, by gesture, nor by increased speed, did he acknowledge it. The fiercer passions of the Continental soldier were now being aroused, and he again shouted:

"Death, or surrender! Unless you rein up within a minute, I will fire!"

Still the Briton was heedless of the threat. It could not be that he courted death, in making this desperate struggle for life. It was plain, then, that there was some good reason for his composure. Alfred, permitting the allotted minute to pass, fired.

"That will overtake you!" he exclaimed.

But he was wrong. The British saddle was still filled, and the gallant steed did not relax his pace. The discomfited soldier then saw on what the fugitive had depended—that he was out of range. Though chagrined at this incident, he held badly to the chase. The Briton gained a wood; but, when Captain Horton reached it, he found that this cover afforded no advantage, for but a single avenue led through it, down which both galloped, until they emerged upon the Ramapo.

"Ah! I see his object," thought the pursuer; **"he is flying to the cowboys, and I trust will uncover some of their secret haunts. The chase may yet end in victory."**

He had scarcely uttered this hope when the stranger, turning his horse sharply down a deep, narrow ravine, dashed on with undiminished speed, leaving the Ramapo in his rear.

Alfred followed at the same reckless pace, until another angle brought them in full view of the gorge, at the entrance to Old Elsie's abode. But on, on, the pursued and pursuer fled, when another turn brought them upon the road to Mr. Ward's house. Thoughts of Amy revived in his mind, and the singular coincidence that, in this wild chase, he should be guided to her very door-step, was interpreted most encouragingly.

"We shall have him now!" thought the Captain, exultingly, "but he will be Amy's captive, for this road conducts directly to the house, where Mr. Ward has ever three or four stout fellows, who will not permit an English uniform to escape through their hands."

But another surprise! The stranger put his horse at a fence, cleared it, dashed through the orchard it inclosed, leaped out of it as readily as he had passed in, and disappeared from view! Alfred attempted to follow; but his horse refused the leap, and he rode forward to the house, there to encounter Mr. Ward, who received him most heartily. On being hastily informed of the circumstance that had just occurred, he directed the most diligent search to be made; but all to no purpose; neither horse nor rider had been seen!

The simple kindness of the Wards, however, lessened the burden of his chagrin. Amy soon appeared. She met Alfred with a smile, the sweetest he had seen lighten a human face, as it seemed to him.

"Welcome, welcome, Captain Horton!" she exclaimed. "I could not anticipate such joy as this. We have heard of your fame, and were fearful that that would give you a distaste for such a poor, dull locality as ours; but I suppose you are only upon a flying visit, and we are highly flattered that you should be so thoughtful as to call on us."

"Oh, but I am not the bird of passage that you suppose," replied Alfred, "for I am stationed with my regiment beyond the—the—"

"The gorge, Captain Horton," interposed Amy. "You hesitate to name that spot, fearing to revive in my heart feelings of a painful nature. It does so; nevertheless it can never be forgotten, and this brings me to a subject on which I was too sick to speak when we parted. It is that of the death from which you rescued me."

"Parlon me," interposed Alfred; "the subject must be painful to you; pray, then, do not mention it."

"It must be as you will," replied Amy; "but the gratitude I owe to you will ever be the ruling sentiment of my heart."

This expression, pronounced with pathos, was followed by silence. Alfred was much affected; and, had he not been restrained by the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Ward, might have been moved to give utterance to his emotions. At length Amy broke the spell, by saying:

"I trust you intend to remain the day with us?"

"I promised myself that pleasure," replied Alfred.

"Then we are honored," said Amy; "and as a preliminary step to your entertainment, perhaps you will accompany me to the orchard, where several of our people are gathering fruit."

The captive Captain of course consented, and thither they repaired. This was the place into which the fugitive had leaped and secured his retreat. Horton was examining the spot of the passage, when Amy, who had been issuing a few directions in reference to certain fruits, joined him.

"I was examining the fence," said Alfred, as if in explanation of his minute observations; "I saw it leaped to-day by a horseman, and am not now astonished that my horse refused to follow. I think he acted with far more sagacity than his rider. You are not aware of my adventure?"

Alfred then related the circumstance of his morning ride, which ended in the leap into the orchard. Amy listened with attention, and seriously observed:

"And if you had shot that young man, who seems to have been guilty of no greater offense than the wearing of an English coat—which, perhaps, in the present dearth of broadcloth, is adopted by more American officers than he—would you have justified the act?"

"If I had shot him, I should repent it now," replied Alfred. "The pistol was fired in the exasperation of the moment. I believe, however, that he is an Englishman, for he first made for the Rancho, in the hope no doubt of finding succor there; but being disappointed he dashed down the ravine to the gorge, then cut by the road up to this spot, as if he perfectly knew every inch of the way. None but an enemy who had purposely studied the route, could have passed over the ground so safely."

"Do you intend to adopt any measures for the detection of this reputed officer?" asked the lady.

"I scarcely know," said Alfred; "I think I must patrol these parts, and endeavor to penetrate into some of the hiding-places of these cowboys, with whom I have little doubt he is in league; if, indeed, he be not some emissary of Clinton, prowling around here for no good purpose."

The subject was then dismissed. Captain Horton was in ecstasies. Never before had he seen so much of Miss Ward, and the lady's association served to fan the flame in his bosom. He was flattered and encouraged, too, by her kind attention, which gave such buoyancy to his hopes that, as evening approached, he sought an opportunity to disclose the real object of his visit. This was not difficult, for Amy walked and conversed with him with the unreserved confidence of a sister, so that when they had strolled, after dinner, to the bottom of the garden, where stood a rude summer-house roofed with the climbing woodbine, they entered and sat down to enjoy the fragrance.

"This is delicious!" said Alfred, in rapture; "you have bestowed great taste and judgment in the management of these gardens." His thoughts were not upon the garden, though he spoke of it. The hour of departure was approaching; the crisis of his fate was near. A word might plunge him in despair, or raise him to the heaven of acceptance. He trembled at the power of woman over the destinies of man.

"If what I now feel be the sufferings of doubt," he thought, "what must be the torments of rejection?"

The disturbed state of his mind began to display itself upon his face. There was a visible uneasiness upon the part of Amy, who at once suggested a return to the house. Alfred could no longer restrain the passion of his heart. He commenced:

"I have a few words to say before we separate, Miss Ward."

Amy became greatly agitated, but did not attempt to end the interview, as if determined to await the sequel.

"My return to my present camp," continued Alfred, "has been permitted at my own desire. I had but one object. It is a powerful one, and I quitted my tent this morning firmly

resolved upon its prosecution. The avowal of my love for you must be delayed no longer. I can not return with the burden of its unavowed strength on my mind, although without your acceptance of it, I shall be oppressed by despair when I seek relief. I confess that I love you truly, and I ask your love in return."

"You are more than worthy of it! You have all it is in my power to give!" cried Amy, while her face was concealed by her hands, from which copious tears of agony were falling. "I owe you every thing—alas that I can only bestow upon you gratitude—sisterly affection—friendship."

"Gratitude!" repeated Alfred, in dismay; "sisterly affection! Wherefore not love, such love as I offer thee?"

"I have at my command no love such as you claim," said Amy, sobbing convulsively.

"You love another?" exclaimed the desperate lover.

"It is true—I do love another truly, if not wisely," said Amy, in words scarcely intelligible from her sobs; "but I am no more fortunate than you—he loves me not, and I am most wretched indeed."

Alfred staggered to the door of the arbor; this sudden eclipse of his hopes left him for the moment powerless. Agony, deep, intense, was stamped upon every line of his pallid face. He felt around for support, as one seeking for a helping hand, and at last cast himself at full length upon the green sward. How long he lay there he did not know. He awoke to full consciousness to find it dark and himself alone. He heard voices, and the old people soon appeared with a light. They were in search of him, and began to inundate him with innumerable questions, but, fortunately, with an indisposition to await any reply. He learned, however, that an hour before Amy had sought her room in a very distressed condition, and had since been in violent hysterics. She had sufficiently recovered to direct her mother to seek Alfred in the summer-house.

He determined to quit the house at once. It was late; the night was dark; even the stars were hidden by the mist, and the roads were obscure and dangerous. In vain the anxious parents enumerated the terrors of a ride by night back to camp. They spoke of Elsie and her imps, of Claudie and his fierce men, who were said to occupy the vaults of the earth

for many miles; of cowboys, skimmers, and other desperate creatures coëval with the time. The resolution of Alfred was unshaken. He was at least as desperate as they, and mounting his horse, reluctantly unstabled by the hospitable Squire, he plunged into darkness and solitude.

CHAPTER X.

THE DRAGOON'S OATH.

THE ride of Captain Horton from the Wards' to his camp was desperate enough. His horse, refreshed from the morning's chase, was as reckless as his master. Alfred passed the gorge without a feeling; no one disputed his mad race, and his gallant charger, covered with foam, ere long rushed into the slumbering camp. Horton responded to the challenge of the sentinels, and then, throwing the animal's rein to his attendant, he entered his tent, cast himself upon his bed, and there writhed beneath his pangs until the morning.

"Where can her heart have traveled?" he exclaimed to himself. "Is it toward that Englishman whom I chased? It is not impossible! When she spoke of him in the orchard, she seemed more deeply interested than her words expressed. There was great solicitude in her manner. *It is he!* That stripling and enemy has won her love, while *I* have her *gratitude!* She gave him refuge, too, for he never could have escaped without some such complicity. He could not have escaped so completely, had I properly sought him. But even his detection would not have promoted my suit. Oh, I, most unhappy! How I hate the seclusion of this camp. What is this?" he continued, casting his eyes upon a letter on the table. "It is Randolph's letter to Miss Woodfall! Poor, anxious girl; it shall be delivered. I will not neglect the happiness of my friends in my own deep sorrows. Ah, Randolph, I have lived to disprove that illusion of yours!"

Mindful of his duty to Pauline, he mounted early the next morning and rode to Mr. Woodfall's. The house seemed

neglected; the doors and windows were closed, an unusual circumstance in such fine weather, which made him apprehend that the chief object of his visit must be absent. The female who responded to his summons at the door, recognizing him, ushered him into a reception-room. Her countenance was somber, and so was that of the man who took his horse. He feared that some calamity had changed the aspect of both house and inmates. The servant returned with a desire that Captain Horton would proceed to Mr. Woodfall's room, as that gentleman was too ill to remove from it. He proceeded to the apartment. Upon a couch in the darkest corner reclined the old man.

"Captain Horton," said Mr. Woodfall. "You are welcome to this miserable home. I am now the only inmate of the family—*Pauline is gone!*"

"Miss Woodfall gone!" exclaimed Alfred, in astonishment.

"Stolen! Abducted!" said the broken-hearted father. "My energy is gone—my heart is broken—"

"Sir," interposed Alfred, grasping the parent's hand, "relate to me the particulars of this terrible event. Make every thing known. I am here with my men, every one of whom will volunteer for the service. Cheer up, sir; think not of the past, but of the future. Reveal all to me, and then we will act!"

The old man's grasp tightened upon the hand of Alfred, while tears flowed down his furrowed cheek. He regained his composure remarkably, and then gave Alfred a very clear account of all the known circumstances of the abduction. It was a painful event, truly, for all. After thinking profoundly upon the matter, Horton enjoined the most scrupulous secrecy, and promising early attention to the case, hastened back to the camp. Once there, he wrote the following letter:

"RANDOLPH, MY FRIEND—Calamity has fallen upon the family of Pauline. Calamity such as requires your presence to repair, if indeed, it be capable of adjustment. There is something to avenge, which may require your troopers as well as your own sword. I write in urgency, and you can not reach here too soon for the necessity of the occasion.

"Misfortune has visited me also. I should have grown frantic beneath her discipline, had not my energy been needed in your behalf. I have seen Amy; I asked her love. It was

refused. She loves another, and gives me her sisterly affection as all that is at her disposal. ALFRED HORTON."

A trusty messenger was sent with this letter to Captain Murray. Poor Alfred wrote lightly of the sorrows which pressed upon his own heart; but took no such liberty with the disaster of his friend. With rapidity unexpected, the messenger returned. He bore the following letter:

"ALFRED, MY FRIEND—The terror of calamity to Pauline gives wings to haste. You do not state the nature or degree of the disaster to her family; but beneath a veil of mysterious words, you leave me room to fear that something personal to Pauline has occurred; but I regard it as an inadvertence caused by your great sorrow. The day you receive this, I will be beside my Pauline, for, before your letter reached me, I had been ordered on the march.

"About Amy Ward: I feel almost to doubt, even against your unfortunate conviction, for I can not imagine that she can love another at the painful expense of declining you.

"I inclose a line to Pauline. It will sustain her till I come. RANDOLPH MURRAY."

Horton sighed deeply as he read this letter.

"He is still unprepared for this terrible event," he said. "I hoped he would have put another construction upon my words; but I scarcely know what I wrote, my mind is so unfit for any subject but my own feelings and little sorrows—little compared with his. I will ride to the old camp, where he will doubtless take up his quarters, that he may have some intimation of the extent of this misfortune, before he reaches Mr. Ward's house."

Captain Horton, reaching the old quarters, found that the troop had arrived. Randolph already was in the saddle, and about to start for Pauline's residence. The friends were rejoiced to meet.

"Will you extend your ride and join me?" asked Randolph. "I need not tell you whither I am bound, nor that I shall give full liberty to Malvern to travel at his utmost speed."

"I will accompany you, Randolph," replied Alfred. "I have something to communicate, of a magnitude you are scarcely prepared to hear."

"Not Pauline—not Pauline, personally? You wrote, '*the family*,'" said Randolph, much agitated.

"To Pauline, personally," replied Randolph, aware that he must, sooner or later, divulge the frightful truth.

Randolph's face grew ghastly pale, and the bridle-rein fell from his hand. Placing his hand upon the shoulder of his friend as he rode beside him, he said:

"Tell me, Alfred, is Pauline dead? I can bear it now."

"She lives, Randolph, but she has been abducted!"

"Abducted!" he exclaimed, in increased agony. "My lovely Pauline fallen into an enemy's hand? It is worse than death. Is it known by whom she was seized?"

Captain Horton related at length all that he had learned, as well as his adventure with the British officer, who, he suspected, was a confederate with Claudie in the outrage.

Randolph listened calmly to this recital; but it was the calmness of desperation. He would not trust his voice; but resuming his bridle, the friends increased their pace and soon reached the residence of Mr. Woodfall. The health of that gentleman had improved after Horton's visit. When Randolph, however, entered the room, the father was again quite unmanned and wept convulsively.

"Oh, Randolph, whom poor Pauline loved beyond herself," he said, at length, "your presence gives me assurance that I shall again see my daughter. My feeble hands are almost useless, but such as they are, you may command them. I am weak and unfit to guide, but am ready to follow even into death's door."

"My worthy sir, I pity your sufferings, although my own are above expression," said Randolph. "I will do all that is possible to man. The villains shall feel my vengeance, be assured; but whether we shall ever behold Pauline again is a matter of doubt. There is an innate virtue in her heart that forbids her to survive dishonor, so that, if ever I restore her to your arms, you may receive her as the same Pauline that you lost. Now I must visit the garden, view the last spot on which Pauline trod, and then I will pursue those wolves with the remorseless feelings of the tiger bereft of its young."

Randolph entered the garden, walked beside the fence described to him as that over which the British officer had conversed with Pauline, and then proceeded toward the upland wood. He passed with a sigh what to him were sacred

spots. Then he plunged into the wood, and rushed beneath the trees that had sheltered the wretches who had committed the base crime. Every place was carefully examined, but not a trace remained to indicate the course pursued in the flight. Like a foiled lion, he came forth from the wood, and throwing himself upon his knees, before that chair where he had first whispered love in Pauline's ear, and listened in boundless joy to her coy response, he clasped his hands as he cried :

"Hear me, oh Heaven! I swear by my honor, by my love, by my hopes of peace, to pursue the authors of this crime to the death, and to cease not until they be blotted from existence. I swear it by my sword and my right hand!"

When Randolph was about to rise, he perceived that Alfred Horton knelt beside him. They rose together and walked toward the house, but neither could utter a syllable.

"Alfred," said Randolph, when they had rested a few minutes in the house, "I have two visits to make: one to Elsie Turner and the other to Amy Ward. Elsie is wise in the doings of the district. She can afford me information *if she will*; if not, I will drive her like an enemy from the retreat she holds upon no right save that of tenantry. Amy may, in the moment of her woman's vengeance, when I relate to her the wrongs of Pauline by the violence of this Briton, punish his perfidy to her by some disclosure. But, Alfred, I will be gentle with her; fear me not." Then turning to Mr. Woodfall, he continued: "I can not revisit you until the morning. Alfred will remain with you another hour, and in the evening will meet me at my camp. Be confident that I will unravel this mystery. If I can not regain Pauline, I am no less prepared than you to die."

He rode rapidly to the retreat of Elsie. He knew nothing of the means of entrance; but he remembered the channel through which the water ran, and resolved to follow that. Approaching the gorge, he perceived Goblin, and, leaping from his horse, seized the dwarf and desired him to lead the way to Elsie. The poor creature pointed up the water-course. Randolph insisted upon being personally guided and was conducted up the dark channel, and debouched into that singular basin of hills which Amy had once visited. Seeing the hut he at once strode toward it. The door was

open. Inside sat a gaunt, aged woman, who regarded Randolph with a look of the most ineffable composure.

"You are Elsie Turner, I suppose?" said Randolph.

"I am, Randolph Murray," replied the old woman.

"You are supposed to be acquainted with every thing that occurs?" said Randolph, endeavoring to conceal his astonishment at her unperturbed coolness; "little escapes you which transpires within this district. Your means of information appear to be fruitful."

Randolph paused to watch the effect of his words; but the shrewd Elsie did not speak; she sat silently gazing in his eyes. He resumed:

"An outrage has been perpetrated—"

"I know it, Randolph Murray, I know all about it," interposed the old crone; "I know, too, that you are come to heap the consequences upon the head of poor, helpless Elsie. If you want her life it is an aged one; if you desire her possessions, they are scarcely worth the holding; if you seek her art, it dies with her. All these I have ceased to value, and your violence will be unfelt."

"Elsie, my passions are fierce, for a great wrong is to be avenged. A crime against humanity and innocence has been perpetrated which I were base indeed did I not resent. I cry aloud for vengeance, which is just, and must be executed. Will you guide me on my path?"

"I can not, Randolph Murray," replied Elsie, calmly.

"Is not a British officer the chief instigator of this crime?"

"No doubt you're well instructed in that matter."

"Is not Charlie another of the miscreants?"

"Have a care how you speak ill of Claudie, if you would see to-morrow's sun," is a correct saying of the country here," exclaimed Elsie, with energy.

"Elsie," continued Randolph, perceiving by her answer that she was Charlie's friend, and doubtless one of his coadjutors, "does Pauline Woodfall live?"

"She lives, and is uninjured in body and in honor," replied Elsie.

"God be thanked for that!" he ejaculated, with undisguised fervor. "If she be thus safe and unharmed, it shall go less bloodily for the Briton and the traitor Claudie. Farewell! I

will now seek Amy Ward, whom I suspect of having a greater knowledge of this mysterious stranger, than either you or I."

"Amy Ward!" exclaimed Elsie. "Then speak her kindly, Randolph; address her in the words of love, for she is so powerful with this British officer, that she could procure the restoration of Pauline."

Randolph looked around to confer some recompense upon Goblin; but the pigmy had disappeared from view. He returned through the gloomy gorge, and, leaping upon his horse, rode toward Squire Ward's residence. He was welcomed by the family. The sweetest of smiles rested upon Amy's face, but she was pale, nervous, excited. A fire gleamed in her eyes which Murray never before had observed. It startled, and pained him. The two young persons were soon alone. They sauntered into the orchard.

"Miss Ward," he commenced, "have you any knowledge of a horseman who dresses himself in the costume of a British-officer, and rides much in your vicinity?"

Amy did not reply; but Randolph perceived that her hand trembled, her bosom was convulsed, and her lips became colorless. Murray pursued the subject:

"He is unfit for aught but guilty association. He has abducted a daughter from her father, whose sorrow has nearly borne him to the grave; and by the same infamy has he deprived a faithful suitor of the dearest tie he had to life."

Amy still said nothing; but she could not conceal her agitation. Randolph proceeded:

"But, retribution approaches. Pauline will not be unavenged. I have sworn an oath, and Alfred Horton knelt with me at the shrine where I first unveiled to her my love, that I would pursue the villains to a bloody atonement. I swore by my right hand to—"

"Hold, hold, in mercy!" screamed Amy, grasping the arm of Randolph, "you know not what you say, nor of whom you speak! Recall that fearful oath, for there is a relation between that officer and me that can not be severed."

"My oath is uttered! It has ascended *there!*" exclaimed Randolph, with terrible energy, pointing upward.

"Hear me, Captain Murray," exclaimed Amy, rising, and resting for support against the tree, "before your rage drives

reason entirely from my mind. I know this horseman, and you know him, too. I have heard him speak of you with affection, and, speaking from my own judgment, I believe in my heart that it was more in the spirit of solicitude than crime that this person has acted."

"I would consider," replied Randolph, contemptuously, "a lady's character compromised by such subterfuge in defence of villainy, was the speaker other than Miss Ward. As it is, I will attribute your conduct to the natural desire of a woman, who is blind, to shield one who must be her lover. But you are weak; permit me to assist you to the house."

Amy leaned upon his arm, silent, trembling, agonized. As they approached the door, she asked, in a voice that exhibited the depth of her interest, and of her agony:

"Captain Murray, what will be your next step?"

"To-morrow," replied Randolph, "I shall be in the caverns of the Ramapo, for there, I believe, the monster reposes with his prisoner. He would not leave Claudie's fastness, for fear of arrest, and there I shall doubtless find him."

Randolph took his leave. Before he was fairly out of view the strange horseman was seen flying toward the Ramapo!

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORMING OF THE CASTLE.

RANDOLPH'S respect for Amy Ward was greatly shaken by this last interview. He could not understand her relations with the Briton; but he felt that she was compromised in patriotism if not in honor by them. Reaching camp he related the occurrences of the last few hours to Alfred, who had awaited his return. The two friends did not essay to penetrate the mystery, but proceeded at once to arrange for their morrow's work of invasion. Randolph at length thus ordered:

"At dawn, march toward the Ramapo. I will proceed by the gorge, and we will form a junction at the end of the

ravine. Disperse your men well upon the plain. Seize every stranger, and enlist every inhabitant who will lend his assistance, for we *must* destroy the infamous gang that lurks in that ravine. Induce Mr. Woodfall to ride with you. His presence will greatly excite the people of the neighborhood in his behalf."

Randolph, fully convinced that Claudie was concerned in the abduction of Pauline, and that he directly or indirectly still had her in his power, resolved to march along the whole length of the Ramapo, to search it, yard by yard, that he might penetrate its most secret shelters, hoping to discover the haunts of the brigands, or to capture one or more of the villains and force them to divulge the hiding-place of their chief.

The morning opened bright and cheerful. The men were early in the saddle, and the march commenced. As he approached the gorge Randolph discerned Goblin speeding toward the entrance. The leader at once dashed forward and soon held Elsie's messenger prisoner. Murray at once resolved to make the boy his pilot.

"Goblin, do you know where Claudie is this morning?"

The affrighted lad nodded his head in assent.

"Can you guide me to his quarters?"

At this moment all attention was riveted upon another object. Upon a point of rock high above the gorge stood in full relief a female figure. Her arms were uncovered, her head was bare, and her white hair floated in the breeze.

"Randolph Murray!" Her voice rung out clear and strong, "thou seekest Claudie! He is in his den. Pauline is there. I demanded her release, that thou mightest have thine own. He has refused, and thou *shalt* have justice. Goblin shall conduct thee to the chambers of the mountains."

She disappeared, and Murray turned to the boy for the promised guidance, who at once led off toward the Ramapo. Keeping well up in the hills, soon the dragoons met Captain Horton's infantry at the place assigned. Mr. Woodfall was with them. Randolph, in a few words, related the incident of the road, and the friends made preparations for decisive steps. It was inferred that Claudie must have several avenues of escape, therefore the cavalry were thrown out to

watch events, while to Alfred and his men were deputed the honors of penetrating the cave.

Meanwhile the greatest confusion prevailed beneath the earth. Elsie had visited the brigand's lair, and peremptorily demanded Pauline's release, to save bloodshed and prevent the troopers from penetrating into the mountain fastnesses. But the chief was not a man to yield in the face of danger. He counted upon his own strength, and the secret caverns of the hills, to put at defiance even the indomitable Captain Murray. He refused Elsie's demands, and somewhat peremptorily bid her away. She left with a threat half muttered on her lips. Scarcely had she gone when Claudie's scouts arrived with intelligence that two parties of soldiers were approaching the Ramapo from different directions; one of them being mounted. Soon others reached the cavern with information yet more startling, that the dwarf, Goblin, was with the horsemen as pilot!

"What punishment does our brotherhood award to one who discloses the secret of our cavern?"

"Death!" shouted the infuriated men.

"Then if Goblin and Elsie are false, let death be their portion, to be dealt by the first of the brotherhood that may meet them!"

They had scarcely growled their terrible assent, when the report of fire-arms was heard from a distant gallery, and Claudie exclaimed:

"Ha! they have entered, and at the extremity of the gallery I had intended for our escape. Stand by me, my braves, and we will beat them out. Up the gallery, scoundrels! Be cool, fire low, and keep well in the hollows of the walls. Ha! That was a deafening volley! Reply, boys, quickly, and then to your heels. More harmony in the distance! Do you hear it? They are getting it, my brave lads, and seem retreating!"

Goblin had faithfully led the way to the entrance; but, knowing the one used by Charlie was strongly guarded, he pointed out another which he had long before discovered. Alfred boldly entered with his men, and hoped to take the scoundrels at disadvantage, but he found the enemy prepared. A furious discharge of musketry ensued, which occasioned

such loss to the assailants, without inflicting any perceptible injury upon their adversaries, that Captain Horton thought it prudent to retire and consult with Randolph.

The two officers discussed the feasibility of several plans, and had decided upon a second attempt by way of the main entrance, when Goblin rushed from the underbrush.

"Quick!" he said, in a low voice, "the robbers have quit the cavern and are now escaping down the mountains!"

"By the powers of my sword, this villain must not escape!" the dragoon exclaimed. "Blow the rally!" he shouted to the bugler. The usual notes rung among the hills, and soon the troopers came rushing in. "Into the mountains, men! Spare not a flying robber! Keep in sergeant's squads. Away with you!"

The men flew off on their free command, followed at a run by the infantry, who were as eager for the pursuit as hounds on the quick scent. Randolph and Horton were about to penetrate to the cavern by the now unguarded entrance, when they were confronted by Elsie.

"Back!" she cried. "All are gone from here save one, who has laid a train to the magazine and will explode it to your destruction. Pauline is gone—borne away by the flying Claudie. Hasten to the hills, or he may yet escape!"

It needed not another word to turn their steps. The two officers mounted the rocks, guided by the shouts and reports of fire-arms which they heard from above and far off among the hills. Suddenly they heard a pistol-shot, and then a woman's scream. Both stood appalled for a moment, then dashed off to the spot indicated. Goblin appeared to come out of the very earth at that instant.

"Here, quick, follow me!"

The two men rushed after him and soon stood over the body of the British officer, who lay writhing on the ground in pain, his face concealed in the grass, and the blood slowly oozing from a wound in the side.

"Don't stop!" said Goblin, "Claudie has the lady in his arms, and has gone down this ravine!"

At the sound of voices, the officer tried to rise. Alfred helped him up; but, catching a sight of his face, staggered back like one stricken with dismay. Yet he clasped the

form closer to his bosom, and the eyes of Amy Ward gazed full in his face!

Randolph and Goblin had already flown in the pursuit. Alfred was alone—dead to all sights, all sounds, save that of the dying form in his arms.

"Alfred—dear Alfred. Kiss me before I go. I have done wrong—oh, so wrong! but it was not irreparable, for I was going to return Pauline safely to her home, and have tried for many days to effect her release, but Claudie has prevented. She is unharmed. I bore her away from Randolph because he flung my wild love at his feet, and I was mad. It was all wrong, wicked, and I am justly punished. Claudie shot me as I attempted to take Pauline from his grasp. I pray God he may not, in his fury, kill poor Pauline! Ah, Alfred, how little we know of life until it is ebbing away from us. I love you—love you dearly, that I know—why have I permitted revenge to be my guiding motive? Alas! I know not—it is all so strange. And I thought, too, that Elsie would surely assist me—" Her voice failed, and the sentence remained unspoken. The astonished Alfred laid her tenderly upon the turf, while she kept close hold of his hand. A brief struggle, and all was over; Amy Ward lay dead before him.

Randolph, preceded by Goblin, soon came upon the brigand, pushing his way down through the jungle of a wild ravine. The villain stopped when he found pursuers upon his track, and, placing his stalwart form before the terrified and half-senseless Pauline, confronted the dragoon. Seeing that Captain Murray was alone, he leveled his only loaded pistol and fired, with a celerity which found Murray perfectly unprepared. Something bounded in air before the dragoon, and Goblin fell at his feet pierced by the pistol-ball. Murray rushed upon the bandit, and a terrible hand-to-hand struggle commenced over the body of the now perfectly inanimate Pauline. It was of short duration, however. Another actor appeared upon the scene. It was Elsie. For a moment she stood over the form of Goblin; then walked deliberately up to the two men, drew a knife from her belt, and drove it into the brigand's sword-arm, rendering him powerless. Without saying a word she turned, picked up Goblin's body, and

disappeared. Randolph and his enemy both were too astonished at the moment to move. But the sight of Pauline recalled the lover to his duty. Springing upon Claudie he bore him to the earth and disarmed him, just in time to be relieved from further care by the appearance of a squad of his troopers. The men seized the brigand, and soon were proceeding to camp with him, where, on the morrow, he and the half-dozen of his band who had escaped the speedier death among the hills, were shot as outlaws and murderers.

Randolph, raising Pauline in his arms, pressed her to his bosom. The joy of the meeting was too great even for his great heart, and he wept like a child. But it was only a momentary weakness. The inanimate woman did not come back to sensibility at his call, nor did kisses pressed upon her eyes and lips unclasp the seals upon them. He then proceeded to bathe her temples and lips with liquor from his canteen, and soon had the truant soul again recalled to the waiting body. She opened her eyes—gazed steadily for a while upon Randolph, as if recalling the past, and then, throwing her arms around his neck, wept tears of a great happiness upon his breast. Soon, however, she rose, and, moving away from him, gave such a look of agony as pierced his very soul.

“Oh, my father—where is he? Take me to him!”

There was so much distress in her tone, that Randolph advanced, as if to clasp her again to his arms; but she motioned him away, crying:

“No—no, Randolph; I am not yours—a great sea is between us, and I shall perish in it. My father—lead me to him, as my only protector!”

The Captain stood for a moment like one in a dream.

“Not mine!” he murmured. “*Not mine!*” A painful thought flitted across his brain, and he turned as pale as a corpse. “Come!” he said, solemnly, but firmly, and he led the way up the ravine. In silence they walked, not touching hands even. Soon they came upon a sight which turned the current of their emotions. Before them sat Captain Horton, holding in his lap the head of the dead officer! Alfred arose, and seizing Randolph’s arm, pointed to the dead:

“*There lies Amy Ward!*”

"Amy Ward! Impossible!" said Randolph. "It is the Briton—the author of all my misery!"

"Nevertheless, it is Amy Ward," said Alfred, while tears coursed down his cheeks, and he flung himself upon the ground in a burst of grief, which it was very painful to contemplate.

Pauline had not moved. The revelation, so sudden, so incomprehensible, was too much for her distracted senses. She remained as immovable as a statue, and quite as pale. Her appearance aroused Randolph. He touched her shoulder.

"Pauline!"

She came slowly back to a realization of the scene before her. Then she extended both hands to Captain Murray, while yet her gaze was fixed intently upon the face of the dead Amy.

"I see it now, though dimly, darkly," she murmured; "Amy it was, who lured me away—Amy it was, who had the rites of marriage with me solemnized, to protect me from the approach of others; Amy it is, who has died before me. I am not, then, a wife, and I am yours, my dear Randolph—yours only!"

Her eyes were now lifted to his own, and her face gleamed with such a light as could only radiate from a soul of angelic purity. Her lover drew her to his breast, and imprinted a fervid kiss upon her upturned forehead, as he said:

"I thank thee, Oh most merciful Heaven, for the bliss of this moment, and for the great blessing bestowed I here forgive all the past!"

A sound of approaching feet was now heard; a couple of troopers approached, leading Herbert by the arm, a prisoner. She appeared astonished at the scene before her, but soon recovered:

"Gentlemen," she said, "there is a mystery here I can not comprehend. This good officer is Captain Henry, of the British army. He was married to Miss Pauline there, in the cavern, though she never saw him after marriage until this day. And now I see, by the long hair and the fair throat, that Captain Henry is no man, but a woman. It is all very strange!"

Alfred, who had regained his composure and had risen to

his feet, now repeated Amy's dying words, and Randolph began to see, though indistinctly, through the singular circumstances, and to appreciate Pauline's peculiar sufferings. He pressed her more tenderly to his breast, and led the way down out of the mountains, accompanied by Hogget, while the troopers and the afflicted Alfred bore the body of Amy away to the house which was now to be rendered so desolate.

It is barely possible to conceive the nature of Alfred's feelings over the final and fatal *dénouement*. That Amy had pursued a remarkable, and, to him, an unaccountable part, he freely admitted; but that she had tried to do right at last, he as fully believed as his love for her was true. And the touching reference she had made to her conduct and to her love for her preserver, came to him like a Gospel of forgiveness—he pressed his hand upon his heart to still the great cry that welled up on his lips, for the loss he had incurred. Others might mourn her, as parents, as friends; but he, before all, was chief mourner.

The body had scarcely reached its destination, ere Randolph, Pauline, and Mr. Woodfall arrived, to know, if possible, more of the strange relations of Amy with the abduction, as well as to console the dreadfully bereaved parents. Pauline was pained beyond words; that she should have been instrumental in exciting the bandit to the deed of killing one whom she now knew was not her enemy, was, for a while, the source of poignant grief.

The parents, though astonished and overwhelmed for a moment, soon became calm, and regarded the event in a matter-of-fact way, which it was difficult for others to explain, who had known with what tenderness Amy had been cherished. It is not the most openly expressed sorrow which is deepest and most enduring. The Squire admitted that his daughter had done wrong—said it was queer that she should have chosen to make friends with the enemies of his country; but assumed that, as Amy was of age, she had a perfect right to do as she pleased. This was his only reference to her conduct, and if he or his wife condemned or applauded the spirit of their adventurous child none ever knew, for they were silent over their bereavement.

From all that was known, as well as from Hogget's

developments, Captain Murray could not look upon the dead Amy with other feelings than the deepest commiseration. She had loved him so much that no sacrifice was too great for her to make, even to the theft of her he claimed as his own—truly a fearful expression of her passion and her spirit. The soul of resentment within him had passed away, and he dropped over Amy's grave the tears of a heartfelt sorrow.

Alfred mourned not, to outward eyes, but his friend read, in the pale, calm face, a sorrow too holy even for sympathy. Much as Randolph loved him, he did not fail to perceive that a shadow was between them, and when, after the burial, Alfred said adieu in a tone of tenderness, Murray knew it was also an adieu to all their old confidences—old affections. Captain Horton left camp at once, proceeded to head-quarters, obtained from Washington an immediate call to the field, and the country, for many a month, was startled by the daring of his exploits. At last a lull came in the story of his deeds, and the brave man found death by fever in the hospital—not on the field of battle, where he had so often courted the grim messenger. Murray sought him out; was with him to the last, and executed his dying bequest—to be laid by the side of Amy Ward. The old but still well-preserved monument, down deep in the bosom of a quiet valley among the hills of Orange county, attests that Captain Alfred Horton, of the Continental army, and Amy Ward sleep together in peace.

The result of the assault on the brigand's retreat wrought sudden changes in the fortunes of many of our characters. To Pauline and Randolph it brought, along with its pain, a bliss intensified by suffering. The marriage soon celebrated, filled the cup of a bliss not often vouchsafed to man in turbulent times. To Elsie it brought change, for she disappeared wholly from Black Hollow—whither, no one ever knew. A grave near the old hut marked the resting-place of Goblin; but over her resting-place rested a mystery which time did not dispel. The hut went to ruin, along with all its relics and garniture, for none cared (or dared, shall we say?) to enter the precincts of Black Hollow, after Randolph ascertained, by inspection, that she was gone. To Hogget it brought change—not unpleasant, for she became an

inmate of Pauline's house; and when, in after years, she cherished in her arms the two sons and a daughter of the peaceful household, she did not fail to bless the day that sent Pauline Woodfall a prisoner to her cave.

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